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NICODEMUS;

OR, A TREATISE AGAINST

THE FEAR OF MAN;

WHEREIN THE CAUSES AND SAD EFFECTS THEREOF ARE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED, WITH SOME REMEDIES AGAINST IT.

BY

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THE AUTHOR'S DEDICATION.

To all Ministers and Teachers in Churches and Schools throughout Germany—Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, in the fellowship and communion of the Holy Ghost.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

GIVE me leave, who am the least of all the servants of Jesus Christ, for the love wherewith God hath loved us in his Son, to dedicate to you the following treatise. For though I be the meanest member in the spiritual body of our Lord Jesus Christ, (if so much may be allowed me,) yet am I made thereby partaker of the life, spirit, and power residing in him as our ever-blessed Head; and, consequently, what descends from him, is not mine, but his; deriving itself, by virtue of that Head, not only to the weak and despicable, but also to the strong and more honourable members, which stand in need of the co-operation of the weakest member, to the end the whole body may perform the work for which it is designed, namely, its own growth and edification. If there be any thing in these few lines, conformable unto the mind of our chief Shepherd, and proceeding from the unction of his Spirit, why should it not be readily received? And if, after a truly spiritual trial thereof, you find any thing that is human, faulty, or imperfect, it is hoped you will commend the same to the mercy and love of our great Shepherd, to correct it in me by the gracious influence of his Spirit. And I shall be very thankful, if any one, endued with a larger measure, will be pleased to instruct me, for my further edification.

I do not offer this as a piece of great learning, or a thing extraordinary, as some might perhaps conclude, from the persons to whom it is dedicated. The plain truth of my God, set out in its natural lustre, and the least communication of his divine power lively affecting the heart, is infinitely more valuable to me, than all the polite arts and learning of this world. And my only boasting in the Lord is this, that

I have betaken myself to that school, and, without any merit or worthiness of my own, have been received into it, wherein the highest wisdom is, to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And though I, who have scarcely learned the first elements, and, as it were, my A B C in this school, have the boldness to repeat this my lesson in the hearing of all, yet ought it not to be deemed an effect of pride in me, since I do not commend it as any thing great or singular. But the love of my neighbour, since we all have but one Creator and Redeemer, constrained me, some years ago, to offer my plain thoughts to the consideration of others, concerning the inordinate Fear of Man, under the title of Nicodemus, that night disciple of our Lord. And although of some sheets of it were then printed; yet hath the finishing it, by manifold intervening hinderances, been interrupted, till now that the Lord was pleased to excite me anew, and graciously afford his assistance, to give it the finishing stroke at last.

My soul hath been grieved many a time, in the sense of the apparent corruption, not only of all men in general, but also of our order in particular. More especially hath my heart been touched to the quick, when from innumerable instances I have been convinced, that the fear of man is become the epidemical disease of our teachers. For when I reflected on one hand, with what spirit, with what joy, with what undaunted courage and boldness, the servants of God, in the Old and New Testament, set aside all regard and fear of man, delivering, as the Lord's ambassadors, their message plainly, and without mincing the matter, though it exposed them to the apparent hazard of their lives; and, on the other, how gently and how softly we go about it now-a-days; and how little we manifest the truth to the conscience of every one: when I moreover considered how much they suffered with Christ their Lord, for the sake of their testimony; and how the most of us take care to preach so smoothly, as not to incur the least shadow of their sufferings; all this made the difference between us and them appear so exceedingly great to me, that I could not but be amazed and astonished at it.

Pardon me, beloved brethren, if you think me to speak with too much plainness and simplicity; for I am not at all ashamed to become a "fool for Christ's sake," that I

may be wise indeed. I must own, that it is much upon my mind, how very few there are amongst us, that really believe what Christ saith, "Whoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 33; as also, how few there are amongst us, that can say with Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Lord, we have forsaken all, and followed thee," Matt. xix. 27. I question not, but we are all very well pleased that we are allowed to have wives and children, and to possess the goods of this world, and indeed the scripture does not disallow it. But do we as well consider that of St. Paul, "This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, therefore, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. When our Lord and Master was in this world, he was so far from desiring the honours, pleasures, and riches of it, that he was indeed the poorest and most despised amongst men, entirely spending the days of his humiliation in procuring our salvation and happiness. And it is He that tells us, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 27. And St. Peter saith, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps," 1 Pet. ii. 21. Whence I conclude, that we also ought to be so many shining lights before others, by our hearty denial of all the honours, pleasures, and riches of this world; and by employing our lives entirely for the service and assistance of our neighbour. But if, on the contrary, we seek ourselves, being influenced, in what we do, by temporal concerns; then, as far as I understand, we depart from that glorious pattern Christ our Lord and Master hath set before us: neither is there any thing, to my apprehension, that doth more effectually deprive us of God's blessing in our calling, than this doth. For sure it is, that the greater concern we have for our own profit, ease, and honour, the less we shall have for promoting the real good of our neighbour. And as long as our minds are not wholly conformable to the mind of our great

Shepherd, whose servants we are, it is impossible he should be well pleased with us. For he searcheth our very hearts, and regards all our doings and intentions, whether we feed the flock, or ourselves; whether we seek every one his own, or that which is His: and if he be not well pleased with us, whence can we expect a blessing upon so sacred a function as ours, since we cannot have it but from his grace? This I take to be the true cause why we are so strongly possessed with the fear of man; for did we desire nothing in the world, we should not fear it.

Give me leave, beloved brethren, to add a word more to you. We have a day of judgment before us, when we must give an account to the Supreme Bishop, of our stewardship, who will demand of us whether we have desired the things in this world infinitely less than the salvation and happiness of man, according to his own example, who had nothing else in his eye? How can we then entertain the least thought of appearing before Him in that day with joy, when our hearts will upbraid us, that whilst we were here, we took more pains to improve our land, than the souls committed to our care? to increase our flock, and sum up our yearly revenues, than to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come? that we were either careless in our preaching, without the least tincture of godly zeal and earnestness, as if it were no more than some other common trade; or else intending by it, rather to set forth our own arts and learning, than to recommend the simple truth of Jesus Christ, without any gloss or trimming, to the consciences of men? Alas! it is but too apparent, that the generality of men, both in cities and villages, are sunk into the blackest vices, and all manner of the most abominable corruptions.

If so be now we continue sleeping, and do not set upon the work of reformation with another kind of earnestness than hitherto we have done, how, think ye, shall we be able, with any boldness, to stand before the Son of man, or allege that common excuse, that we have done our endeavour, and we could do no more? There are but few amongst us who so truly take to heart their incumbent duty, as did the late pious Grosgebauer,* in his "Watchman's Voice." For

* Theophilus Grosgebauer, a Lutheran minister at Rostack, left the mentioned book at his death, which was soon after printed with an approbation of the Faculty of Divines. It contains a discovery of the causes of

did we seriously consider what he hath written, it were impossible for us not to join hand in hand, and, with united force, to hazard life and estate, in rescuing the honour of God, which is so horribly assaulted and violated in these days.

It appears also, that we are very little concerned about what the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, represent to us, namely, that our order hath been always most in fault, whenever a general corruption hath overspread the people. Do we consider what a thundering lecture is read to pastors and teachers in Jer. xxiii. Ezek. xxxiv. and Matt. xxiii? If we did, should we not apply ourselves to our duty with another kind of fervour than hitherto we have? Should we not be more solicitous about the state of our own souls in the first place; and in the next, about the souls that belong to our charge? Should we not break loose from the transitory amusements of this world? Should not we enter into greater familiarity with Christ our Lord and Master, by prayer? Should not we, in many things, give a more edifying and shining example to our flocks? Should not we more effectually clear ourselves from all suspicion of covetousness, and other vices reigning among the clergy? Should not our preaching be composed with more plainness and simplicity, and delivered with greater power and demonstration of the Spirit? Should we not be more careful to examine those that we admit to the communion, whether they be worthy receivers, and whether they grow better by receiving it? Should we not be more fervent and earnest to admonish every one in particular? Should not we strive and wrestle more, in prayers, for the welfare and salvation of their immortal souls? Should we not, as soon as any desire and love to God's word appears in our hearers, more readily lend them our helping hand, that the sparks of grace kindled in their hearts might not be extinguished, but increased and blown up into a flame? Should not we, by frequent catechizing, endeavour to put a stop to the overflowing of ignorance and vice? Should not our outward conversation with men be more holy, and consequently more successful and edifying? Verily, my brethren, I fear we have good reason to be ashamed, when we

the decay of christian piety, and the unsuccessfulness of the word of God, and of the sacraments in the evangelical churches, for the promoting a real conversion in souls. See the preface to "Pietas Hallensis."

read what Taulerus* saith, in his exposition of the Gospel for the fourth Sunday in Advent: "A spiritual person ought to be so enkindled and all-flaming with divine love, and both inwardly and outwardly so conformable to God, that whenever any one came to him, he might hear nothing from him but GOD; and his heart and mind ought to be fixed on him by burning love, and so ready in all things faithfully to obey his will, that such as visited him, though with cold and lukewarm hearts, might be heated and set on fire by him; as we see that cold and dead coals are kindled, when they are put to glowing ones, which soon impart their light and heat to them."

Did we without intermission supplicate our Lord and Saviour, what could hinder him from making us spiritual men, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, and so far estranged from the friendship of this world, that, according to the example of God's servants of old, we might brandish the sword of the Spirit with a cheerful and undaunted courage, that it might be said of us, "Behold the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" True it is, we have this our treasure, the light of the gospel, in earthen vessels; but since Gideon's earthen pitchers must be broken, what a folly is it for us to dream of saving our skins by being ashamed or afraid of suffering! As if we only, forsooth, were an exception from a general rule: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Alas! what will this temporal life, or the ease of it, the riches we hoard up, the dignities and the honours of men we hanker after, avail us, when, for pursuing of these, we shall suffer loss in the life to come, or neglect the welfare of one single soul?

* This author was a Dominican friar, of a very holy life and conversation, and preached first at Cologne, and afterwards at Strasburg, where he died in the year 1379. He is highly commended for his holy doctrine and exemplary life, both by Protestants and Papists, especially by Luther and Melancthon. His excellent works, written originally in the old high Dutch language, are translated into Latin by Surius, and printed several times at Paris and Cologne. The most famous of them are his Sermons, Institutions, Letters, Meditations upon the passion of Christ, and a small treatise concerning the Poor Life of Christ, published in English in 1708; being a most admirable testimony of the true spiritual part of the christian religion, and having some remarkable passages of the author's life prefixed to it. The famous German divine, John Arndt, imbibed chiefly his practical way of teaching from this author's writings, as competent judges may see in his large work of True Christianity, printed in Latin, in London, in the year 1708

I have opened my mouth, and made bold to address you with the simplicity of a child; and am very willing to appear mean in your eyes, my brethren; only despise not the truth, which is not mine, but my Lord and Saviour's. I am not at all ashamed freely to acknowledge, that I do not account myself to have apprehended, or to be already perfect. But this I dare tell you in truth, (my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, which also the righteous Judge will testify for me at that day;) that I do not in the least seek to distinguish myself by publishing any strange or new doctrine, by what name soever it may be called: but since I have found grace in the eyes of the Lord to perceive my own misery, and to find the way, called by our Lord the narrow way, all my thoughts and endeavours have been bent, in the simplicity and faithfulness of my heart, to continue in it, and still more eagerly pursue it, and, as far as possible, to direct all men to it. I despise or envy none of you that are of the same function with me, either in the universities or ministry; nay, I know many amongst you whom I honour to that degree, as to think myself unworthy to do them the meanest service, and whom I love and honour without the least alloy of envy or contempt. But on the other hand, I know many, and I fear the most of our profession, whose conversation, as far as I can discern, is not at all conformable to the pattern Christ hath set us, and who have not yet attained to a living experience of the work of conversion in their own souls, which they are to preach to others:—and as for those, I heartily pity them, and pray for them, that the God of all mercies would enlighten their eyes, to know the things that belong to their everlasting peace.

Neither is my heart in the least incensed against those that do most unjustly slander and reproach me, upon no other ground but that of false supposition and prejudice. I rather find my heart moved with compassion towards them, seeing we must all one day appear before the same Judge, to give an account how we have dealt with our fellow-servants. For my part, I cannot call black white, nor take him for a follower of Christ, and a pattern of his flock, in whom I find nothing of the nature and mind of Christ.

True it is, I have made this the matter of my public

complaints, and continue so to do, but not at all out of any bitterness or disrespect; but rather from a hearty and inward pity for the loss of so many thousand souls, who, in my apprehension, might and ought to be more carefully looked after. By nature I am never a whit better than another, but what I am, I wholly owe to the grace of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus, to whom also I ascribe all the glory, and not at all to myself. And therefore I despise nobody, though I am not insensible to the dangerous state of their immortal souls. When I say, that by the grace of God I am what I am, I intend nothing else, but that God hath been pleased to show mercy to me, and of mere grace to draw me to himself; or if any thing more has been vouchsafed to me, it is this, (wherein also I heartily rejoice,) that I have been made partaker of the sufferings of Christ, though in a very low degree. And it is the greatest comfort to me, that men of this world speak all manner of evil of me falsely, and load me with censures and accusations, the groundlessness whereof the Lord at that day will discover.

Let us all, my brethren, think of this great day, and so settle our accounts against it, that we may then appear with joy and confidence. Let us cast away all other cares, and be earnestly concerned about this only. Then will all these unprofitable contests and oppositions, started hitherto, drop of themselves; and we, with united hands, shall carry on the work of the Lord, and be heartily glad to see any fruit raised thence to the glory of God, be it by ourselves or others. And I beseech God, from the very bottom of my heart, to influence you all with a measure of his Holy Spirit and to sanctify you to himself for vessels of his honour, and to pour down his transcendent blessing and divine power upon all your planting and watering! that it may appear clear as the day, that the Lord is risen to build his Zion. The Spirit of love and truth keep all our hearts, and lead them into the true fellowship and communion of Jesus Christ, who alone is able to give that true peace, which the world cannot give.

AUGUST. HERM. FRANCK.

At Glaucha, near Halle.
October 26, 1701.

NICODEMUS;

OR,

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE FEAR OF MAN.

CHAPTER I.

What the fear of man is, and the several kinds of it.

By the fear of man, (the subject of this treatise,) is not understood, first, that natural bashfulness, whereby a man is apt to be dashed out of countenance in the doing or speaking any thing before those with whom he is not acquainted; nor, second, that natural wariness, whereby a man, seeing one stronger than himself, or whom he believes to be an overmatch for him, is not forward to strive with him; nor indeed any thing else, which in human affairs is called fear of man. But here we speak of that fear of man which discovereth itself in things relating to God. In this respect, it is considered, either as a notorious vice and abominable fruit of unbelief in the unregenerate, who thereby are kept back from a true conversion, from being built up in God, and from confessing the truth of God before men, and consequently from their everlasting bliss and salvation; and by this their conforming to the world are tempted to many sins, to deny Christ, his word, and members: or this fear of man may be considered as a failure cleaving to the regenerate themselves, who strive

against it, and by faith, which is the victory that overcometh the world, at last entirely triumph over it.

Now, this fear of man, whether it be in the unregenerate or regenerate, admits of certain degrees, as being in one much stronger than in another. God often makes his own servants and dearest children (as in other cases, so especially in this) sensible that they are but men; whereof we have a striking instance in the Old Testament in Jacob, who was sore afraid of his brother Esau, Gen. xxxii. 7—11: and in St. Paul in the New, who was with the Corinthians in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, 1 Cor. ii. 3. Wherefore also the Lord was graciously pleased to comfort him with these words: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city," Acts xviii. 9, 10. This fear of man, so far as it cleaves to the regenerate, is continually opposed and striven against, from a principle of faith raised in them. In this contention, though the corruption of our nature do powerfully exert itself, yet by the power of God, and continual wrestling in prayer, we are enabled successfully to war against it, and to overcome it at last; so that, after the contest, the glory of God is rendered thereby the more visible and conspicuous. We therefore think it needful to treat here of the fear of man, both as it is a reigning sin in the unregenerate, and as it is a weakness adhering to the regenerate themselves. Because even sins of infirmity must be more and more put off and subdued; that so believers, through the power of Christ, may press into further degrees of

that unshaken firmness of heart, and that holy boldness, a true faith is generally attended with.

The outward distinction of men makes no difference in the thing itself; for even kings, princes, and great men of the world, are no less subject to the enslaving fear of man, than those of a far lower and meaner condition. There are many princes who would do more good, did they not stand in awe of their own servants; and experience convinces us, that men of the first rank are more infected with the bane of the fear of man, than those of a mean condition. The reason is, because they have more of the pomp and glory of this world to renounce; they have from their youth up been least accustomed to the practice of self-denial; and very rarely have met with any that offered to deal plainly with them, and to tell them the truth. Teachers and hearers are alike insulted by this sin; but in teachers it proves more dangerous: for they are the most backward of all others to acknowledge it. They think themselves to be teachers of others, and therefore are very shy to call their new-birth in question: they are more ready to sit as judges over the consciences of others, who often faithfully labour in Christ's vineyard; and do not only abound with this sinful fear themselves, but possess others with it also. Nay, they are often found to be the men whose fear deters others from giving God the glory, and openly confessing h s truth.

In a word, this fear of man, wheresoever it is found, is in itself a most heinous vice, and a kind of idolatry, arising from the spawn of an unbelieving heart, whereby we lay aside the fear of God from before our eyes, and think, speak, or

do any evil, or leave thinking, speaking, or doing that which is good, for any consideration or regard of men; it being our duty simply to follow the word of God, and to eye the same as our rule and directory in all that we do or leave undone. Now, the more there is of this fear still cleaving to believers, and the less they endeavour, through the power of God granted to them, to get a full conquest over it, the more dangerous is the condition of their souls.

But I shall have occasion, in the sequel of this discourse, especially in the third chapter, to give some further declaration of this fear of man and the several kinds of it.

CHAPTER II.

Of the sources and causes of the fear of man.

THE causes thereof are either internal or external.

I. The internal are chiefly these:

1. Unbelief, which is the spring and root of all vices.

2. The love of the world, and of the things of the world, namely, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

3. The want of true self-denial, which is always joined with the love of the world; or, when we fear lest men should prejudice us in our reputation, estates, ease, or in our bodies and life itself, if we should simply follow the guidance of the word of God.

4. Fleshly wisdom derived from corrupt reason, which uses to measure divine things by its own standard.

5. The false imagination we have of ourselves,

and the prejudice settled in the mind, and making men believe they may be acceptable to God, though they should yield in several cases merely out of regard to man, without any leave from God's word to do so.

6. False humility, which is swayed more by human authority than by the word of God; and prompts us to refer all things to the judgments of others, who, as we pretend, understand them better than ourselves.

7. The great deceitfulness of our own hearts, which can put so fair a colour upon all manner of sins, that we persuade ourselves we act very prudently, whilst we are influenced all this while by nothing but unbelief and fear of man.

8. The desire or hope to be advanced to some place of honour in the world.

9. The want of experience in the ways of God, which makes us hesitate in difficult cases, and indisposes the soul to rely wholly upon God, fearing lest he should let us fail or miscarry in them. This proceeds from our not having sufficiently learned how dear they are to God, who entirely trust in him; and what powerful assistance he affords them, to accomplish his own work in them.

10. Fear of presumption, lest we should seem to tempt God in casting ourselves wholly upon him.

11. Secret pride, which prompts us eagerly to desire a happy end, and visible success in all our undertakings; whereas indeed we should rest satisfied with an inward success and victory; that is, in having kept a good conscience towards God.

12. Natural shyness, for it cannot be denied that some are more inclined to fearfulness than others. And from this natural weakness springs

bashfulness, whereby many are hindered from performing that with cheerfulness, which a well-grounded faith requires of them.

13. Neglect of prayer, which not only prevents us from obtaining a full conquest over the fear of man, but drives us down further into the stream of hypocrisy.

II. The external causes are these following:

1. The tyranny of many in power, who take upon them to bind and fetter the consciences both of teachers and hearers, being only concerned to preserve thereby public peace and tranquillity.

2. The forwardness of our universities in their dubbing of heretics: for they no sooner perceive any breakings forth of the spirit of true christianity, but they are sure to cast a slur upon it, by giving it an ill name, and all this under a cloak of their great zeal for their highly valued orthodoxy.

3. The conduct of those that enter into holy orders whilst they are unholy themselves, and, after a loose education in the universities, engage now in the sacred function, for no other end than only mere temporal support

4. The high regard and esteem we have for men. This blinds many to such a degree, that they cannot imagine that such great men, so eminent for wisdom and learning, should be so grossly mistaken and drawn aside.

5. The specious and plausible reasonings of such as follow their corrupt reason more than the word of God.

6. The frequent examples of such as are bound down by the fear of man as well as themselves.

7. Worldly riches, that cast frequent and manifold hinderances in our way, and prevent us from

pressing forwards incessantly in the simplicity of faith.

8. Wife and children, who by their importunate way of arguing, and their unbelieving tattle and clamour, do weary out and overcome many.

9. The honour and esteem we have already gained in the world. This makes us very loath to make others think, that hitherto we have deceived the world, and been in an error ourselves. To which may be added, that when a man is placed in some high post, he finds it a hard lesson to give it up, and suffer reproach with the people of God.

10. The threats of others, especially of those in power.

11. The fair promises of the world, which offers great things, if we will but declare that odd is even.

12. Great and honourable acquaintance and friends, who, under the pretence of hearty love and kindness, are always cautioning us not to venture too far.

13. Too great and too intimate a familiarity with the children of this world. Hereby many deliver up their spiritual weapons, and so disable themselves from reproving what is amiss in others with courage and presence of mind.

14. The neglect of frequent conversation with true believers, who walk in the power of faith, and rather choosing those for our companions who are themselves enslaved by the fear of man.

CHAPTER III.

Of the signs and effects which discover the fear of man.

1. A FEARFUL man knows to do good, but doth it not, for fear of incurring the hatred and enmity of others.

2. He is not easily convinced of the truth; and though it be laid before him with the clearest evidence, yet he starts many doubts and scruples about it, as having a secret fear, that if he should confess the truth too roundly, he should be hated, persecuted, and reputed a heretic by others.

3. When, after all, a man is fully convinced of the truth, and believes it in his heart; yet, for fear of man, he hides this light under a bushel, by not confessing it before man.

4. Or if he do confess it, it is only amongst those who are lovers of truth themselves, and from whom he hath nothing to fear; but before the enemies of truth he conceals or denies it, and reasons so dubiously about it, as to leave them uncertain whether he believes it or not; at least he takes care so to order his words, as to be able to give them always a handsome turn, and so to come off without trouble.

5. When a fearful person lives in a place where truth and religion is professed, there he owns it open-mouthed: but if he comes to another place, he finds many knots and difficulties in the point, so that he resolves to halt betwixt both, and leave it undetermined; for a timorous person is always unstable and wavering.

6. Such a one, when he finds he cannot avoid the owning of the truth, yet takes care so to limit and pinch it, that it may appear tolerable even to the enemies of truth.

7. A fearful man will at last break forth with an avowed confession of truth, but it is when he finds himself well backed with human authority; that is, when a person of unspotted reputation in the world, and of a great name and learning, hath

asserted the same before him, under whose patronage and authority he then shelters himself, not daring to trust himself under the shelter of God's word.

8. Accordingly, such a one is more careful to furnish and arm himself with a fine train of human testimonies, than with the word of God itself; and thinks he hath a right so to do, because he sees that the cheerful confessors of truth have sometimes stopped the mouths of their shameless adversaries with such arguments.

9. A fearful man is very cautious of reading those books which might be a means of opening his eyes, pretending that some secret poison may lurk in them; when indeed the cause of his fear is, lest he should fall under the suspicion of heresy, if he were known to read them. And for this reason.

10. Fearful men do use to lay aside and hide good books, though they own them to be so, and find themselves edified by them; not considering that in so doing they are ashamed of the words of Christ.

11. A fearful man's speech or silence is regulated by the wind that blows from court.

12. He holds his peace when abominable open profaneness and sins call for his reproof; and when he is put in mind, that his function obligeth him to speak, he saith, he knew it would be to no purpose, and therefore chooseth rather to say nothing.

13. His word is always, "softly and fairly, my friends!" Soft and fair goes far; because he is afraid of suffering by the ready boldness of faith, so conspicuous in others.

14. He always fears that others go too far, not considering, that he himself goes not far enough.

He quickly perceiveth the mote in his brother's eye, but minds not the beam that is in his own eye.

15. The common sort of people he can reproach boldly enough; but when he is to speak to great and honourable persons, his mouth is gagged.

16. When a fearful man at any time bears witness to the truth, he takes care to speak it behind the backs of those concerned; whereas when he speaks face to face, he gives it quite another turn.

17. A fearful man, having taken upon him the ministerial function, is like a fox, that hath always some kennel to escape to, as long as he finds himself well backed, he thunders it out; but when that which he depended on fails him, he creeps into his hole again.

18. Being got into the pulpit, he reproves and exclaims boldly; but he denies that in so doing he meant any particular person.

19. The pulpit is a fearful preacher's strong-hold and castle; but when he is to speak face to face, and to bear witness to the truth, then he is very supple and complaisant.

20. As the hare flieth at the beat of a drum, so a fearful minister drops the freedom of his speech, when the world threatens and terrifies him with apparent danger of being punished for it.

21. He is always complaining of the secular power, because he is altogether ignorant of the power of God.

22. He professeth in the pulpit that he must leave the work of reformation with the magistrates; for his part, he could do no more towards it; when at the same time he admits all persons, without distinction, to the Lord's table.

23. He preaches often of the power of the keys,

namely, of binding and loosing; and yet complains sorely that the key of binding is taken from him: not considering, that no man can take that from him, to which God and his function do entitle him.

24. He saith always with the slothful, "There is a lion in the way;" for he fears, should he alter any thing of long received customs, he might bring himself into trouble.

25. When he hears filthy speech, foolish talk and jesting, he holds his tongue; and when it comes from great men, he graces it with a smile.

26. He goes into bad company, to the visible hazard of his soul; for the fear of man makes him their slave.

27. Sometimes a good thought comes into his mind, to do something for the glory of God; but he soon confronts it with a "But what will the people say of it? Won't they construe it so and so?"—And then fairly drops it.

28. Above all things, he cannot abide to be thought singular

29. He carefully avoids too great earnestness in his function, or profession of christianity, lest it should expose him before men, and so make him incapable of doing any further good.

30. He very cautiously shuns frequent and familiar conversation with the poor members of Christ, that are cast off and despised by the world; for fear people should fix a name of reproach upon him.

31. By night or in secret, he is willing enough to discourse with good people; but cares not to walk with them publicly in the street, lest others should take notice of it. He rather appoints some

certain place to meet them, where his conversing with them may be concealed, or at least do him no prejudice.

32. A fearful man that begins to relish truth, willingly keeps to the hearing of good preachers; but yet takes care so to manage the matter, as that he may not incense such as he knows to be ungodly and belly-servants; which often gives occasion to damnable hypocrisy, and makes the last error worse than the first.

33. Out of complaisance, he goes sometimes to hear the sermons of hirelings, though they dispense nothing but railing and controversy, as being very loth to be quite out with them; and therefore he gives them a good character before others, for fear of having them upon him.

34. A learned man that is convinced of truth, but somewhat fearful withal, makes it his business, in his sermons, disputations, and upon other occasions, to bring in something against enthusiasm and fanaticism, in order to persuade his hearers that he is truly orthodox. And this done, he thinks he may venture to speak the truth also, and that the world will let him pass for what he pretends to be, which is true enough; for the world takes it for granted that he means as they apprehend it, that is, as spoken against those upon whom they falsely bestow these names.

35. A fearful man rejoices for a time, whilst the light of truth shines upon him; but as soon as he is called to an account for it, he is sore afraid, makes many excuses, and, by all manner of shifts and evasions, endeavours to extricate himself, and to get rid of the suspicion.

36. If he apprehends himself in danger of being

accused for his owning the truth, he endeavours to prevent it by pleading his innocence, or otherwise to avoid it.

37. When some good and useful work is to be done, he doth not undertake it with a simple reliance upon the living God; but when he finds good patrons on his side, and no appearance of danger, he at last sets upon it; but as soon as a rough wind blows him in the face, he begins to sink, as St. Peter did, after he went out of the ship to meet the Lord.

38. Like as a coward in an enterprise where his life is exposed to danger, is not willing to stand in the front, but would rather bring up the rear; the same is the case of a fearful man in divine things. When others have boldly faced their enemy, ventured limb and life, suffered reproach and contempt, and after all have obtained the victory, and prevailed through the power of truth, immediately these fearful ones join with them, and would fain be looked upon as persons who have owned the truth long since. But there is a vast difference between confessing the truth with the mouth, and patiently submitting to such trials and difficulties as usually attend the confession thereof.

39. He doth not willingly keep correspondence with those whom the wicked world doth reject; for he fears his letters might be intercepted, and he become the subject of men's talk.

40. A timorous minister, though he be convinced of the truth, yet he is desirous to live in outward peace with those of his own profession, though ungodly, especially those who officiate in the same place with him: the effect whereof is, that he is trusted by neither good nor bad, and reaps no good fruits from his ministry.

41. He asserts and maintains, rashly and without due consideration, that wicked ministers can rightly discharge their office, though they want the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind: he says that we are not to withdraw from them, but diligently to attend their sermons; notwithstanding that, by their railing against that which is good, and exposing it to scorn and contempt, they prove an offence to the people, and divert them from true repentance and amendment of life, rather than any way contribute to the building them up in God; not considering, that they do nothing else but pull down what he endeavours to build. He feareth, that if he should lay open the great mischief caused by worldly-minded preachers, and the difference there is betwixt one who is a true servant of God, and a hypocritical slave to his belly, (though in so doing he doth not at all derogate from the power of God's word,) he would be counted a Donatist.*

42. Fear of man is apt to persuade us that, should we undertake to carry on the work of the Lord with a greater application and earnestness, we might be hindered from doing the good which now we are permitted to do; not considering, that God is ready to open a wider door to the cheerful and courageous labourers in his vineyard.

43. This fear makes many at their first entrance upon the ministry yield so much in all things, that afterwards they are quite at a loss how to begin the reforming of any thing.

44. The fear of man finds always something to blame in the behaviour of faithful labourers, either about the manner of their acting, or some circum-

* See History of the Church of Christ, vol. ii. p. 34.

stances of it; and yet takes no care to mend the matter in himself.

45. The same fear exposes those as presumptuous, stubborn, disobedient, self-conceited, proud, and pharisaical, who, with a free and child-like spirit, break through all opposition.

46. It will not allow a minister to make a too plain and particular application of his sermons, so as to awaken his hearers to a due sense and understanding of their deep corruption, that they might be delivered from it.

47. Fearfulness is the daughter of unbelief, and the mother of hypocrisy. Wherever we meet with the two last, we may conclude, that the fear of man is not far off. Not one of these three will ever break with the world, and therefore they are excluded from the friendship of God. The man is convinced of the truth, and commendeth it, when he is amongst good people; but as soon as he lights into bad company, the fear of man seduceth him into a compliance with all their folly, vanity, and wantonness, under a false and mistaken notion of allowable christian liberty.

48. The fear of man calls drunkenness a sin, and yet allows the drinking of a person of quality's health, though a man hath already drunk as much as is sufficient.

49. A fearful man sees the glory of God violated, hears cursing, swearing, taking of God's name in vain, blaspheming, ridiculing the scripture, without rousing himself to rescue the honour of his God, who hath rescued him out of so many dangers.

50. The fear of man is never so busy in starting objections, as in cases that tend most to the promoting the glory of God, and the good of our

neighbour. Hereby such a one hinders himself from ever experiencing the glory of God in his powerful help and assistance; yea, it bewitcheth him to that degree, that it giveth him a false evil conscience, as Luther calls it, which persuades him he need not concern himself with it; though it be nothing else but the fear of man that keeps him back.

51. A fearful man, if he be a lover of that which is good, rejoiceth to see others break through in faith, and obtain victories and blessings one after another in the work of reformation; but yet is afraid himself to put his hand cheerfully to the work so happily begun.

52. When he finds nothing to cavil at, he cries, "The work is not well-timed, or is not to be set upon in this place!" when indeed there is no fault at all, but his own lack of faith.

53. He saith, "I must take care to live in peace with my brethren, and not make them my enemies," and continues to dissemble with them; and so the dead bury their dead.

54. A fearful man is easily moved to envy, especially when he sees those who are young, acting cheerfully in faith, and cries, "That is none of your work, but must be left to those that have greater knowledge and experience."

55. He often saith, "My hands are bound; it is the business of the magistrates, and of my superiors; the ecclesiastical courts ought to regulate these matters: if I were ever so willing to begin a good work, I can expect no assistance in it."

56. He cries, "I can do nothing alone; if others would act as well as myself, something might be done."

57. He is afraid of burning his fingers, and

therefore rather employeth another to do it for him: he makes the arrows, but others must shoot them.

58. He says, "I have been hit already, I don't care to come there again."

59. He sometimes ventures himself in many particulars; but when he finds the storm arise, and the waves beat, he gives way, and so loseth again what he seemed to have already gained.

60. He sometimes makes use of the scripture to overthrow that which it plainly asserts and teacheth, that he may appear a stiff maintainer of orthodoxy, which he esteems his crown, and therefore cannot think of parting with it.

61. He cries, "Surely we ought to proceed with prudence in all things;" not considering that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 Cor. i. 25.

62. When a fearful man findeth nothing to tax in the thing itself, he blames the manner of doing it, and saith, It should have been undertaken after another manner; when he himself finds no way or manner at all to undertake it, as he ought.

63. He saith, "Faith is faith, though it be weak." Thus he comforts himself, and strives not to attain to greater degrees of spiritual strength, whereby he might break through all opposition.

64. He feareth where no cause of fear is, and frameth many difficulties to himself, which would all be dispelled as a mist by a lively faith.

65. He is not forward to give way to universal love towards those that are engaged in other sects, for fear of incurring the displeasure of those of his own. And by reason of this want of love, the same enmity is kept up amongst our modern parties, as was between the Jews and Samaritans of old.

66. A fearful man forsaketh his best friends in the time of trial.

67. He has no courage to reprove his neighbour but says, "that God is so merciful, and so great a lover of mankind, that he doth not doubt but he will pluck him out of the mire in his due time."

68. He saith, "Things are not to be forced at once; we must proceed by steps," though he himself do not advance in faith from one step to another; that is, from a lower to a higher degree. "A strong place," saith he, "is not to be taken at once; the line of circumvallation must first be drawn:" but before he hath done with his line, and got things ready for an assault, the cause is lost!

69. When a fearful man is to press the inward truth of christianity, he saith, "Alas! it is too high for them." If he is to reprove any outward miscarriage, he accounts it a thing indifferent, or else saith, "We must not begin at outward things."

70. He goes further sometimes, and saith, "To what purpose is all this bustle? my reproofs would but make the people worse."

71. He is very apt to believe any false reports against the faithful children of God; and because his heart is tossed with fear, he is very forward in warning them to take heed to themselves, and by his imprudence damps and stifles the cheerfulness of their holy faith.

72. He sits on the bench when believers and good souls are condemned, and consents to the unjust sentence pronounced against them.

73. He saith, "As long as I can but keep myself within due bounds, I shall be in a better condition to gain others; for we must with St. Paul become weak with the weak." But here lies the

difference, that what St. Paul did proceeded from faith, and a divine discerning wisdom; whereas in him it is the fruit of unbelief, and of worldly wisdom.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the manifold mischiefs caused by the fear of man.

1. MANY thousands of souls are thereby kept back from a true and thorough repentance and conversion; because they do not suffer the knowledge of the truth, the brightness whereof hath in some degree enlightened them, to shine forth in its full strength, but hold it, as it were, imprisoned by manifold hypocritical shifts and pretences. One is afraid of his wicked minister; another, of his brethren in the same function; another, of his partons; another feareth the censure of some famous divines; another, that of his superiors and magistrates, &c. In consideration whereof, we have great reason to say with our Saviour, "Wo unto the world because of offences!" Matt. xviii. 7. For what an abominable and horrible sin is it for a man, to give occasion to others of falling into this sinful fear, and thereby to hinder their conversion? But yet this is not sufficient to excuse those who fear men more than the living God. Would to God the magistrates might here open their eyes to see the sad effects of their over-forwardness in determining and regulating divine matters, by which they very much obstruct the edification of others, and pinch it within such narrow bounds, by tying it up to their manner and form, though no such limitations are to be found in the word of God, and bind the consciences of men

where God hath not bound them, and take upon them the judgment which God hath reserved to himself! True it is, that by this means they make themselves to be feared by men, and are an occasion of turning aside many, that were in a fair way to repentance, to dissimulation and hypocrisy; but they will once, to their great sorrow, be made sensible who are concerned in that of our Lord, "Wo unto them, that shall offend one of these little ones."

2. Neither is the fear of man a less obstacle, in those that are already converted, to their growth in godliness; forasmuch as thereby they deprive themselves of many opportunities to strengthen and edify themselves in God, which they stand greatly in need of. For this fear makes us avoid the conversation of those who are most able to build us up in our most holy faith: it makes us guilty of many sins against the dictates of our own knowledge and conscience: and as a free and ready confession of the truth is attended with comfort and happiness, and highly useful for advancing a man in faith, and the love of God; so, on the contrary, doth the hiding or utter denying of what a man owns in his heart, keep him quite down, and hinder him from ever arriving at any power of the spiritual life, and a cheerful showing forth of the fruits resulting from thence. Many know not what the reason is why they make such slow advances in their spiritual growth, when all this while the enemy, that is, the fear of man, secretly lurks within, and eats out, as it were, the very vigour and activity of the life of grace; though they take him for their best friend, supposing this fearfulness to be nothing else but wisdom and prudence.

3. When true ministers, on one hand, are overruled by force, their consciences shackled, and their good purposes hindered, and every way dashed and terrified; and they, on the other, have not courage enough to encounter this enemy, the fear of man, and to vanquish it at last; they become dejected and heartless in the discharge of their function, lose their power, insomuch that they hardly know themselves, what or how they ought to speak; they expose themselves to frequent regrets, consume themselves with inward grief and sorrow, and become listless in all their performances. And by this means God's judgments are drawn down upon the magistrates, having taken upon them to domineer over other men's consciences, cities, and countries: churches and schools are deprived of their faithful teachers, and punished with careless hirelings; the most excellent gifts which God hath bestowed upon them, become altogether fruitless; and what good might have been effected by them, is every where obstructed. How great an encouragement is it to a faithful labourer in the Lord's vineyard, when his endeavours, tending to a thorough reformation, are acknowledged by others, and when they readily offer their helping hand for seconding the generous efforts of the teacher! On the other hand, it must needs cool and damp his spirits, when he finds that he can do nothing that will please those that are set over him, and after much ado hardly obtain the liberty of promoting real goodness and piety

4. When others see those who know that which is good, (or, at least, ought to know it,) not only backward in owning and declaring it to others, but also out of fearfulness dissembling it; they are

not a little encouraged thereby to play the hypocrite and worldling in their station. And the grosser this hypocrisy and fearfulness is, the more hurt it doth to others, by confirming them in the same. Nay, it happens often, that by the fearfulness of one single minister, many thousands are infected with the spirit of hypocrisy and dissimulation.

5. This fear of man makes great and honourable persons the most miserable of all men; for hence it is that nobody will venture to deal plainly with them, in order to bring them over to a thorough knowledge of their inward state and condition. A preacher at a prince's court ought above all men to stand free of the fear of man, and to be provided with a good stock of a holy boldness of faith, to charge and reprove princes to their very face, as Nathan did to David. But, alas! where are such to be found? Oh! the horrible and irreparable evils caused by the fear of man at courts! which they are like to account for, who hold their tongues, when they should speak and reprove boldly.

6. The fear of man is always for maintaining old customs; and whilst every one is afraid of innovation, all abuses are thereby more and more authorized, so that all things proceed continually from bad to worse, because nothing is reformed or amended. Wherefore it cannot be expected that a minister, guilty of this fear of man, should ever, by his cold endeavours, bring his church or parish into a better and more reformed state and condition.

7. Where there are two or more fearful ministers in the same place, though they may perchance have a good intention, yet in effect they perform

nothing worthy of their calling; for the one hindereth the other from the sincere and faithful discharging of his pastoral duty. It might be better for some to have for their fellow-labourer one that is avowedly wicked, who perhaps by his enormities might force the truth from them, than to have a fearful Nicodemus for their companion, who, being a timorous night-disciple, shuns the light.

8. God crowns his true servants with manifold success and blessing; he manifests his glory in them, and makes bare his arm before them; but there is nothing of all this, where unbelief hath gained admittance, and where the honour due to God from and before all men, is not cheerfully and undauntedly rendered unto him. For a fearful man trusts God no further than his reason reaches and carries him. When any thing crosseth that, he presently fails; and therefore he can never behold the glory of God, because he wants the courage of a lively faith to prepare him for it.

9. When the adversaries of truth see those who love it, shun the light, this strengthens them in their bad cause, concluding them not to be in the right; because, if they were, they would have no need to fear.

10. A fearful man thinks sometimes by human contrivances to avoid the persecution that is raised because of the word; whereas thereby he commonly exposeth himself much more to the scorn, contempt, and insults of others. The reason is, because he would rather owe his safety to his own ability, than to the divine protection

11. St. James saith, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," ch. iv. 7.: and the reverse of it is full as true; for the more we give way to the

devil and his instruments out of fear, the more they pursue and press upon us. Men might rid themselves of many troubles, could they but resignedly rely upon the authority of their function, and boldly perform what God hath commanded them. If we neglect this, it is no wonder if the devil insult us.

12. When a house is on fire, whatever we have a desire to save, must be laid hold of with courage and resolution; in like manner, when we see the near approach of God's judgments, we ought to snatch men like firebrands out of the fire: but a fearful man always apprehends he might burn himself by endeavouring to save his neighbour. In the mean time the judgments of God overtake us, and crush us both together.

13. God doth infinitely abound with mercy, love, and goodness towards mankind, and would willingly every day pour out new grace and blessings upon us; but we are not receptive of them, save only by the child-like spirit of faith. Since, therefore, a fearful man doth not act in this singleness of faith as children ought to do, but always apprehends God might some time or other forsake him, he deprives himself of manifold and great blessings, not only temporal, but eternal also.

14. Children commonly resemble their parents; and as the minister is, such commonly are his hearers. If, therefore, a minister be fearful, how will his hearers be ever excited to a true cheerfulness of faith? And those of them who by the grace of God are freed from this base fearfulness, and serve God without fear, will never have any confidence towards their teacher, till they perceive him disengaged from that servile spirit whereby he is

discouraged from promoting the real good of the church. Many ministers do wonder, why the true children of God have so little confidence in them; not considering, that the reason of it is, because their flock never saw in them the least proof or character of a good shepherd, who readily exposes himself to all manner of sufferings for his flock's sake.

15. Unfaithful hirelings do rob and murder many souls, by making them slaves to their authority to that degree, that, for fear of them, people dare not go to hear such ministers as have an experimental sense of religion, and consequently are able to instruct them in the way of truth: though they be convinced they are so. And this is the very thing I said before, that this fear of man hinders many thousands either from being converted at all, or from their further growth and progress in the practice of real piety.

16. This fear of man is the general bane both of city and country. Our superiors would appoint good ministers, but fear hinders them; because they are not willing to displease this or the other man, and this for some trifling reason too. Thus the people must be plagued with a wicked minister. They that should speak at the election of a minister hold their tongues for fear. In the courts of judicature this fear perverts justice, and bereaves widows and orphans, the poor and distressed of their right, because nobody will heartily espouse their cause. The ministers flatter their superiors, and they the ministers, and the rest flatter them both: and all this is the sad fruit of the fear of man.

17. Innumerable souls are lost by reason of this

vicious fearfulness. A fearful minister flatters himself with the hope of gaining upon his people by little and little; "for," saith he, "it must not be done all at once." But before he is aware, unlooked-for death prevents and spoils all his cautious prudentials, leaving him nothing but a bad conscience.

18. He that is convinced of the divine truth, and is sensible of the corruption into which men are sunk in our age, but withal captivated by this fear, or made a slave to human authority,—such a one is always plagued and tormented by a bad conscience; and, being unwilling quite to break either with the world or the children of God, he is looked upon as an unfaithful steward by them both; and he exposeth himself to far more trouble and anxiety than the breaking through, with a ready presence of faith, would have cost him. He finds no joyful and filial assurance in prayer, the word of God hath no relish for him. What he utters is ambiguous, wavering, and distasteful to the children of God, because it is not seasoned with salt. He never attains to a true communion of the saints; and when he should comfort and strengthen others, by exciting and exhorting them in the power of God; he rather drives them to fear and despondency, and quenches the Spirit of God in them: and whereas he should unite them in the bond of love, he rather divides and separates them for fear of their offending his darling, I mean, the wicked world. Thus he goes on himself without any spiritual experience, contenting himself with the bare letter and shadow of christianity, which he hath laid hold on, instead of the spirit and truth of it. He has left nothing but some empty and jingling words

to set it forth; being at the same time void of soul and life, and of spirit and power; he depriveth others as well as himself of their spiritual strength, and so falling at last into a state of carnal security, carries others also along with him, and by these steps is in danger of utterly denying the truth, and precipitating himself into final despair.

CHAPTER V.

Of the excuses that are usually made to palliate the fear of man.

As soon as we begin with true humility to acknowledge the fear of man, as a great and most heinous evil, and so strive against it with prayer and supplication, then the danger is not so great; for then the work is really begun, which, if but strenuously prosecuted, will at last get the full conquest over it. But there are very few that will acknowledge this fault in themselves, and rather expect to be looked upon as men acting prudently enough in their station; nay, moreover they are very ready to find fault with others that come in their way. Whenever one body or other cannot justify their actions, but by a serious discourse endeavours to set them to rights, they are entirely for justifying themselves, and do what they can to palliate their fear of man, with various shifts and excuses; some whereof are more gross, and palpably discover the want of the grace of self-denial in those that allege them; but others are so specious and plausible, that they blind the eyes of many, who take them for men endued with wisdom and understanding. Now, the grosser sort of excuses are as follow:

1. Says one—"Should I act at this rate, I should

soon be called to an account for it." Well! but should this hinder a faithful servant from executing his Master's commands with all sincerity? or ought he to have so little confidence in his God, as to question his protection when the wicked gather themselves together against him, saying, "Let us bring an accusation against him," as they did against Jeremiah, and others of the prophets of old?

2. "Well but," says another, "by this means I shall be put to charges and trouble." Ans. Those who put you to those charges and loss, act very unjustly; and the magistrate, who doth not punish such crimes, doth worse, in suffering a faithful preacher to be put to trouble and charge for discharging his duty. But as for thee, thou art only a steward; let the money go; assure thyself they will get nothing by it, neither wilt thou lose any thing. Have faith in God, he will restore to thee an hundred fold what thou hast lost for his name's sake. God is a faithful Lord and Master; be it only thy care to be a faithful servant; He will not let thee be a loser for his sake.

3. But you will say, "Indeed, if I had not a wife and children, something might be done; and, besides, I am commanded to take care of my family." Ans. Christ saith, "He that loveth father or mother more than me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. You must forsake all, or else you cannot be a disciple of Christ, Luke xiv. 33.

4. But it is written, "If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8. Ans. If children, and

children's children, do not nourish and take care for their old and impotent parents, nor behave themselves dutifully and thankfully toward them, they shew thereby, that the religion they pretend to is but a deceitful piece of hypocrisy; the heathens themselves being very careful to perform their duty towards their parents. And this is the right sense of St. Paul's words: but nobody will hinder thee from maintaining and defending thine own right and that of thy family, provided thy conversation be free from the stain of covetousness, and thou contented with such things as thou hast. But God's honour must not suffer a jot under pretence of providing for thy family. Therefore learn thou this lesson: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," Matt. vi. 33.

5. "But this is the business of our magistrates and superiors; let them look to it." Ans. We ought to obey God rather than man. The magistrate must answer for it, if he require unjust things; thou must be answerable for it, if thou obeyest them in things unlawful, or if upon their account thou omittest what God requires of thee. It doth not belong to thee to say, "Let the magistrate look to it." God hath made thee also a steward and overseer, and therefore he will require an account from thee, and not from another.

6. "We may be turned out of our places and benefices for it." Ans. Happy art thou, when thou sufferest for conscience sake. Though man cast thee off, yet God will take thee up. And as soon as thou thus far overcomest the fear of man, thou wilt then get a lively taste of the joy attending the conquest of this vice: neither shalt thou need to

bury thy talent upon this account; for God can provide for thee without a benefice, and, whenever it pleaseth him, can make use of thee for thy neighbour's profit, and the advancement of his own glory. But it is plain, that thou servest thy belly, and not God, when thou art unwilling to lose thy benefice for the sake of God and a good conscience.

7. "But we do what we can." Ans. Thou canst not do any thing of thyself; but if thou art in Christ, then he alone doth all that is good in and by thee. But who can boast that he does as much as the grace and Spirit of Christ doth enable him to do? Valiant soldiers never think they have behaved themselves in battle with all the zeal and courage that is possible for them. He that is thoroughly sensible of the weightiness of the ministerial function, must needs acknowledge he cannot answer God for the many things he hath omitted for fear of man, which he might have overcome by the power of faith, and which will appear in judgment against him. He that says, he does what he can, shows plainly that he hath never yet tried what is possible by the grace of God. At the beginning indeed, very little appears possible to us; but if we venture boldly, relying upon God, we shall find ourselves supported for doing great things, and in the end be able to say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me," Phil. iv. 13. Overcome but once the fear of man, and then undoubtedly thou wilt proceed from strength to strength.

8. "We have our church-orders, and, if we observe them, then who can find fault with us?' Ans. Some church-orders are better than others;

but God's word is the best rule of all, more particularly both the epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, are the rule and standard of all the church-regulations. There are some necessary points, that are hardly touched by some church constitutions. Some church-ordinances measure things too short, so that the church-concerns cannot effectually be promoted and secured by them. And too often some things are allowed by them, that God's word doth not allow. Thou shalt not be judged by any church-ordinances, but according to God's word. This case excepted, it is very commendable for thee to be diligent in observing all church-orders, and in making use of them for promoting the honour of God, and the common good.

9. Neither are preachers the only men that seek to excuse their fearfulness after such a gross manner: for the people make use of such evasions as are not a whit better. When the magistrates are enslaved by the fear of man, and consequently endeavour to crush that which is good in others, their chief excuse is, that public peace and tranquillity is to be preserved, whatever come of it. And this is, because they do not understand the nature and design of the gospel, of which Christ says, Matt. x. 34, 35, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." But, alas! we never inquire who is the cause of the trouble. Not those who earnestly contend for God's word, but they that will not receive it, and who, by

casting out their lies and slanders against it, are the cause of all the noise and disquiet; and therefore ought to be punished. But where the wolf is judge, the poor sheep always troubles the water. "When I," says David, "speak to them of peace, they make themselves ready to battle." Much might be said here; God grant that the magistracy may feel the divine peace in their own souls, then would they endeavour to lay the right foundation of a lasting peace amongst those committed to their care, and not concern themselves with the false peace, where every one is settled upon the lees of his corrupt and ungodly nature.

10. The common people say, "We must not displease the clergy, our spiritual guides." Ans. If they be spiritual indeed, as you call them, they will never be against you in any thing that is good; but if they be against you when you are earnestly pursuing your edification and growth in grace, have then no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them; for be sure they are then not spiritual, but carnal. What says Christ? "Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind," Mat. xv. 14.

11. "But we must not despise our teachers." Ans. A hypocritical servant of his belly fancieth himself despised, when any seek to be edified by others beside himself; and yet more, if we tell him to his face, that we do profit more by another's preaching than by his. True servants of God seek not their own honour, but much rather rejoice, when they see the people built up in their most holy faith, let it be done by whom it will. Will a wise shepherd complain that he is despised, if any other brings a strayed sheep to his flock again.

It is of far greater concern that thy soul be saved, than that the respect of an ambitious preacher should be preserved. Let him be converted, and preach with the demonstration of the Spirit and power, and then the sheep will soon know his voice, and follow him as a good shepherd. A farthing is not despised, because we value it as a farthing; for it is coined for no more. The same is the case, when we value an idle babbler according to his worth; what reason has he to complain, that he is despised? or if it be a contempt, let him mend, and so take away the cause of it. For it is God's punishment upon wicked preachers to render them despicable: "But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as you have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law," Mal. ii. 8, 9. Thou mayest not slander any body, for then thou art justly complained of. But when thou only seekest the edification of thy soul wheresoever thou findest it most, and heartily to follow thy Saviour's steps, then nobody has reason to complain of thee; and he that does, betrays himself, that he seeketh his own, and not what is Christ's.

12. "We must not worship other gods." Ans. This trifling excuse is usually alleged by those that will not go from their own church, nor have any other minister to edify themselves. And wicked preachers are so impudent as to make use of this text, to deter others from hearing God's word from any but themselves. But if it be thy earnest desire to seek thy growth and edification in God, in

so doing thou dost not worship other gods; but, on the contrary, dost abhor and reject them, as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, choosing to serve the only true living God alone. But if the fear of man makes thee stand in awe of, and depend upon envious and ambitious servants of their own bellies, and to keep fair with them, thou dost neglect thereby the edification of thy soul: then certainly thou art a worshipper of other gods, and a servant of helpless idols, who are dead in sin, withered and barren trees. Wherefore, suffer not thyself to be blinded by such a gross and abominable wresting of scripture; but seek thy edification to the utmost thou art able, and pursue thy christian race without fear, let the world say what it will.

13. It is St. Paul's advice to Titus, "Let no man despise thee," ch. ii. 15. Ans. It is great pity that this text should commonly be made use of as a cover to carnal preachers, and be perverted in favour of their pride and ambition. They conclude from hence, that they have reason to maintain all the punctilios of their outward respect with the greatest strictness, and not suffer any the least contempt to be brought upon them. They interpret whatever is done to their persons, as an assault against their holy function, engaging themselves in worldly contests, and pouring forth their malice and bitterness upon all those who, they suppose, have affronted them. If a true child of God, and especially one of an inferior rank, deals plainly with them, they swell with anger; tell him, they are not accountable to him; he should meddle with his own business, and not reflect upon the sacred order.

Now, people being very well acquainted with the

churlish temper of a great many ministers, they are afraid to speak to them at all, or to do any thing which the ministers may interpret to be against the respect due unto them; as, for example, to frequent the sermons of others, whereby they may be better edified, or otherwise to converse with God's faithful servants. And, moreover, persuade themselves, that it would be a piece of injustice in them to do it, when they hear the preachers allege such specious texts as those: "Let no man despise thee;—whoso despiseth you, despiseth me." But this is a scandalous abuse of these passages; for the apostle means no more than this, that Titus should with earnestness apply himself to the discharge of his function, and at the same time be a shining example to others, by the holiness of his life, that nobody might have cause to vilify his character. This appears from the preceding words: "these things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority." And in the 7th and 8th verses he says, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." The same he writes also to Timothy, in the first epistle, iv. 12. "Let no man despise thy youth."

Shall we think that St. Paul by these words intended to warn Timothy to be very careful to maintain his outward respect and authority; to suffer none of the vulgar to put him in mind of his duty, nor permit his auditors to be edified by others, which would tend to the lessening of himself? Not at all; for he fully explains himself in the following words; "But be thou an example of the

believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine:" that is to say, The way for ministers to avoid contempt, is to perform their duty with all application and diligence, and, by leading a blameless life, ward off the reproaches and censures of men.

True it is, the wicked will speak evil of them, belie and slander them, notwithstanding their unspotted life and conversation; but it is no more than smoke dissipated by the sun, and their calumny will soon vanish away; for when they are known, nobody will believe them any more; but Christ's own lambs will then put a high value and esteem upon the ministers of Christ. And this also is the meaning of the words of Christ, Luke x. 16. Christ there commands that we should hear those who come in his name, or are sent by him, and abide in his truth; that we should attend to their words, and not let them in at one ear, and out at the other. Accordingly, every one ought strictly to try and to examine himself, whether he comes truly in the name of Christ; whether he be sent by him, and keep close to the word of God; or whether, instead of God's word, he entertain his hearers with fine critical remarks, histories, symbols, emblems, flourishes of wit, flowers of oratory, and other such like human inventions; yea, whether he doth in his sermons wholly pervert God's ordinance, by his rejecting and calumniating those who desire heartily to govern their lives by the gospel of Christ. He that hears such a railer doth not hear Christ, but the devil himself; therefore no man ought to be afraid of the threatenings of such a carnal preacher, but endeavour to pro-

mote the salvation of his soul with all earnestness, and to procure his own edification as much as possibly he can. For if, out of fear to displease others, a man neglects his saving conversion, who will be able to make good the loss to him?

The more subtle and refined excuses, which carry a greater appearance of truth, are as follow:

Excuse 1. "However, we must use prudence; for Christ himself says, 'Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,' Matt. x. 16. If we should imprudently blunder out all, we should spoil all." Ans. There are two sorts of wisdom; one that comes from above, and another that is from beneath, James iii. 15. The former of these is unreproveable and a most precious gift of the Most High; and is called the wisdom of the just, Luke i. 17. This is a noble wisdom indeed; whosoever doth thereafter, his praise shall endure for ever. But now, what is this wisdom? no other than the fear of the Lord, Psa. cxi. 10. Wherefore this wisdom is the true and only thing that infallibly destroys the fear of man, and makes us contemn the wicked, and honour them that fear the Lord, Psa. xv. 4. This wisdom represents God so glorious and full of majesty in our hearts, that we readily give up money, goods, honours, yea, our body and life, rather than willingly and wittingly to offend our God, or so much as expose ourselves to the least hazard of offending him. This wisdom leans upon the word of God, as upon a sure staff and stay, and puts no confidence in princes, but says, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man. All nations compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of

thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They have thrust sore at me, that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord," Psa. cxviii. 9. 17.

Thus the wisdom of the just vanquishes, sings and triumphs over all the fear of man, and rejoiceth as a valiant man to run his race. For " they that love the Lord shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might," Judg. v. 31. This was the wisdom of those three worthies, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who, when Nebuchadnezzar in his rage spoke to them, and said, " If ye will not worship the image I have set up, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God, that shall deliver you out of my hand?" They replied, " We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up," Dan. iii. 15, 18. It is by this wisdom that man is " made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and puts on the whole armour of God, that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," Eph. vi. 10, 11. " Stand therefore," says St. Paul, " having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, tak-

ing the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints," ver. 14—18.

Happy is he that is armed with this wisdom, which will instruct him to act prudently in every thing he undertakes. But the wisdom that is from beneath, hath some appearance, indeed, but not the substance, of true wisdom itself; but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. This is that specious wisdom whereby Adam and Eve became acquainted with the knowledge of good and evil at the forbidden tree. Where the fear of the Lord is not continually before our eyes, the foundation of that false wisdom is already laid. Where faith is weak, there she raises herself; where love grows cold, she exalts herself, and is puffed up without reason. She seeks not what is God's, but, under the cloak of his name, she seeks her own. She informs us how to please God, without displeasing the world; to follow Christ, and yet avoid the cross. Her greatest study is how to live in ease and affluence, without touching the cross, Psa. xlix. 19. She trembles at the shaking of a leaf for fear she should be disappointed of this her beloved aim. As long as the kingdom of God consists in words only, she is so very learned, that she cannot utter all she has to say; but when it is to be evidenced and demonstrated in power, then she hath recourse to her many shifts, and cautions others (as having a hearty good will for us) not to venture too far, for fear of throwing themselves into some inconvenience: jumbling light and darkness

together, she shifts and turns every way to keep the cross from her shoulders; she swims with the current, and avoids all converse with those who suffer reproach for Christ's sake, or else, like an imperious mistress, will domineer over them. If her advice be rejected, then she swells with bitterness, and judges all they do to proceed from disobedience, obstinacy, and self-will. She keeps up the appearance of godliness as long as she can, and will by no means be thought wicked or ungodly: and yet she holdeth her tongue, when called to sit in judgment, where the children of God are condemned; nay, often assists in pronouncing their sentence, and then says, they have precipitated themselves into this misfortune through their own self-will and want of prudence. She does much evil, that good may come of it, or under pretence that all doing of good may not be hindered. But as soon as the light riseth again out of darkness upon God's children, and the sun shines upon them after their night of tribulation, then she would fain be looked upon as their best friend. And, indeed, who is able to describe in all its colours, this horrible monster, which is come up out of the bottomless pit? It is true, we must make use of prudence; but consider well both these sorts of prudence, and judge which of them is to be chosen: yea, set thyself before this looking-glass, that thou mayst know by which of these two thou hast squared thy life and actions hitherto.

Exc. 2. "By too free and open a declaration we may hinder a great deal of good, that otherwise might be done, and endanger the overturning of all; whereas, by prudent restraint, and concealing ourselves, we may underhand promote a great deal of service." Ans. This is nothing else but a piece of

false prudence; for though it is not to be denied that an understanding man finds a time for silence as well as speaking, yet a true christian ought to put his trust in God, not doubting that he will so far bless the good that he aims at, that no other good undertaking will be hindered by it. If we do not continue in this stedfast confidence in God, the devil will be sure to delude us at pleasure, always representing such phantoms to us, that will make us let go what we have in our mouths, to catch at a shadow.

It is matter of wonder, that there are many, who, though they cannot so much as name one man, whom they have really converted to God by their ministry, yet, for all that, will not in any one particular rigorously break through, in order to the discharging of their function after another manner, and with more earnestness and application; and this under the same pretext of fearing to overthrow all, when in truth they have never yet built up any thing that can be overthrown. But if a minister has already done some good, why then he ought to think that God will yet further bless his labours, and by his power strengthen and confirm what he hath already begun, and by his own arm effect and accomplish what hereafter will be undertaken with faith and prayer. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee," says God to Joshua, chap. i. 5, 6. And with this promise, every true servant of God may bid defiance to all the world; because the words are spoken (as we see they are applied by St. Paul, Heb. xiii. 5.) to all sincere christians, for their special comfort. The words of

St. James, iv. 17. are of incontestable truth and clearness: "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Let us but follow this rule in singleness of heart, and resign up to God the care for what is to come: for this we may be sure of, that the good can never be better advanced than when one wedge drives another, and we daily gather more strength, heartily to promote the cause of Christ, and the good of his church, being supported by the gracious help and assistance of God himself.

Exc. 3. "We must hold in a little, that when opportunity offers, we may promote a good work with greater force and efficacy." Ans. Where has God given thee leave to let slip an opportunity of doing good, in order to reserve thyself for some other time which thou fanciest may be more favourable? St. Paul bids us redeem the time, Eph. v. 16. or (more exactly according to the Greek,) to buy up every opportunity, that is, to lay hold of it as soon as it offers itself; for when it is once past, you cannot regain it at any price: and that St. Paul calls true wisdom. Reserving ourselves for a future uncertainty proceeds from false prudence. This reservation accustoms thee to hypocrisy, and will hinder thee from ever meeting with an opportunity to exert the true power of faith.

Exc. 4. "To undertake a thing, without being able to effect it, doth more hurt than good; wherefore it were better never to begin." Ans. Thou dost well to compute the charge before thou dost begin to build a tower; but whence wilt thou procure the charges? from thy own ability? no, that can never reach it. Begin thy work with full reliance upon God, and draw thy supplies from his almighty power, goodness, wisdom, and truth; and by this

means thou wilt be enabled to accomplish at his cost the work once begun.

Or, if God, for holy reasons, should not afford success to thy pious endeavours, yet will it be no small comfort to thee, that thou hast left no stone unturned in order to bring it about; and thy conscience will be much more easy than it would have been, if, from a mistrust of God's assistance, thou hadst never set upon it. Perhaps God intends to put thee upon trial, and though it hath not succeeded this time, it may perhaps at another. God can bless thy endeavours in the hearts of many, in stirring them up to an imitation of thy zeal. And if thou shouldst be disappointed in all thy good purposes, by the disobedience and perverseness of those thou art willing to do good to, wouldst thou, therefore, conclude that thy work of love had been in vain? Was not this the case with Christ himself, when he was forced with tears to lament over the city, saying, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings! and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. In like manner must we try all things, were it for no other reason than that our endeavours may stand as so many witnesses against the wicked. Examine thyself, whether thy desire of succeeding and overcoming in all things, and this even before the world, be not the effect of great pride lurking within. Be thou satisfied with the inward victory a true christian can never be deprived of, which consists in thy continuing unwearied in the patience of hope. And even the outward

victory will at last, as the stopped current of a river, break forth more gloriously. Thy rose must flourish under the cross.

Exc. 5. "We cannot do all at once." Ans. Thou unprofitable servant, shouldst thou therefore bury thy talent in a napkin? Though thou hadst tried all manner of ways, and couldst gain but one soul after all, yet thou wouldst have no reason to repent thy labour. God is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto whom be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." Eph. iii. 20, 21. If we would but venture upon it boldly in the strength of God, and lay aside all fear of man, we should effectually experience that God would do more for us, and by us, than we could have imagined.

Exc. 6. "We must have a care not to become the talk of the world, and of getting an ill name. As long as we have no odious name with the world, we may do some good; but if once an odious name be fixed upon us, this makes all our endeavours so likewise." Ans. This is to set reason against faith. Hast thou learned this in the word of God? Does not Christ say, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets," Luke vi. 22, 23. 26. This is a true device of the devil, to persuade men that the reproach of Christ is a

hinderance to the course of the gospel, by which he endeavours to make void the cross of Christ; whereas, on the contrary, every one of us must most certainly believe that he can do nothing at all to the purpose, as long as he refuses to wear this badge of Christ. We must resolutely break through all oppositions surrounding us, and take up the reproach of Christ, before we can expect that the full blessing of the gospel should attend our endeavours.

Exc. 7. "However, by this way, of being reserved, and not exposing ourselves, some may be won." Ans. I fear thou wilt only make hypocrites like thyself; men that are ashamed of Christ and his word, and unwilling to suffer any persecution for the cross of Christ, and yet are at the same time vainly puffed up with some knowledge of truth. But if once thou canst resolve, with boldness, and an unshaken presence of mind, to break loose from the bondage of fearfulness, and thus to evidence thy faith, by taking to thee the reproach of Christ; then others, waxing confident by thy sufferings, will be the more emboldened to speak the word without fear, Phil. i. 14. But as long as this is not done, thou wilt not be trusted by any of God's real children. For a servant of God must be tried and approved by suffering.

Exc. 8. "We must not expose ourselves, and let others make fools of us, for how then shall we be in a condition to edify them?" Ans. This is a common objection with them, who by the fear of man, suffer themselves to be kept back from their real conversion. True it is, we ought not to do any thing that is weak or foolish, I mean, that is contrary to God's word; but it is the devil's suggestion to think we shall expose ourselves by breaking through in faith,

and directing our actions precisely according to God's word. Here it is that St. Paul's caution will do us great service: "Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19. "We are fools for Christ's sake," 1 Cor. iv. 10. Is it not a shame, when the Lord of glory was taken for a madman, and one possessed by the devil, that thou wouldst catch at the applause of men, and be highly esteemed of the world? By this thou givest evidence against thyself, that thou dost not belong to Christ, neither knowest thou the dignity of his cross; and how then wilt thou be able to rejoice in him? It neither can nor must be otherwise. Thou must be looked upon as a fool in the world, if thou wilt be a disciple of Christ; it will not fail thee a hair's breadth. High and low, teachers and hearers, must alike suffer themselves to be censured by the world, when once they earnestly turn themselves to God. For, as soon as their actions do no more comport with the fashionable ways of the world, she scoffs and rails, crying them down for fanaticism, singularity, pharisaical hypocrisy, and loading them with a thousand lies and calumnies. Now, he that is afraid of this reproach from the world, must needs continue a hypocrite as long as he lives. And after all, how foolish is it to be a slave and bondman to the humour of the world, when, after you have done all you can to please it, and to comply with it to the uttermost, you will still be found fault with, one way or other? And yet we are unwilling to suffer this for the glory of God, and the welfare and salvation of our souls!

Exc. 9. "We must become all to all, as St. Paul did; 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," 1 Cor. ix. 22. Ans. St. Paul gave sufficient proof of his being a cheerful and undaunted workman, to whom God had given "not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power," 2 Tim. i. 7. But what hast thou to show for thyself? Crafty and worldly-minded courtiers have also learned to become all to all, but from another principle, by other means, and for quite another end, than St. Paul did. Thou imaginest, perhaps, that thy aim is good; but does it flow in thee from the pure source of a tenderly compassionate maternal love, as it did in St. Paul? On the other hand, consider whether thou canst express the bold alacrity of St. Paul, who was not afraid to withstand St. Peter himself to his face, when the fear of man had made him play the hypocrite, and drew others into the same dissimulation with him, which was contrary to the truth of the gospel, Gal. ii. 14. It is certainly a great point of wisdom thus to become weak with the weak, as not to lose any of our own strength; thus to become all to all, and yet stand free at the same time from all manner of hypocrisy. Examine thyself whether the innocent dove-like nature be in thee, or whether the serpent, with his feigned prudence, hath not corrupted and perverted thy mind from the simplicity in Christ. There is no cloak that more plausibly covers the fear of man than this; therefore look to it, that above all things thou despatch this enemy.

Exc. 10. "If such as are leading men would once begin to break the ice, such as doctors, superintendants, &c., who ought to be foremost in all our good

undertakings, we would readily follow them; but we are not willing to be the first beginners, because it may be construed as pride in us, or have some other ill name put upon it." Ans. Do as a servant that carries the torch before his master, and yet does not think himself better than his master: the kingdom of God comes commonly last to the men of the first rank, and to those who make the greatest figure in the world. When thou art to receive thy salary, thou dost not refuse receiving it till thy superintendant be paid first, but art very willing to be first served. And shall the unbelief of others keep thee back in thy race? in the kingdom of God there must be no dispute about precedency. When thou art convinced of the truth, but dost not obey it, God will certainly punish thee, though thou shouldst appeal to pope or emperor. Consider also that thy crown will be by so much the more glorious, by how much greater thy combat hath been in which thou hast overcome.

Exc. 11. "But it is visible what great disorders arise up and down, when people are too forward, and do not restrain themselves, which is the cause of manifold scandals." Ans. It is impossible but young and inexperienced christians will make some false steps, and not always act so wisely as they ought. Here our timorous gentlemen presently discern this mote in their eyes, and all the while do not perceive the beam in their own. Here they begin to triumph, and say, "Do but see how these people have exposed themselves; it is very well for us that we have not been too far concerned with them; if we had, we should now have been partakers of their shame and reproach." In this case we must give good heed to that caution of our Lord, "Blessed is

he whosoever shall not be offended in me," Matt. xi. 6. We ought to bear with the faults of beginners with great moderation, and a compassionate love; and if we think ourselves to be more wise and more knowing than they, we should endeavour to rectify them "in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted," Gal. vi. 1. But God, and the godly-minded, look upon the thing with other eyes; for there is a vast difference between a person that is as yet spiritually dead, and one that has recovered life from God, but yet is seized by some temptation and weakness common to man; this his High-Priest knowing very well, will accordingly take compassion on his infirmity, The way of the world is, always to spy faults in the children of God, but will take no notice of the good in them. If thou wilt draw back, because others do not what they ought, thou wilt never be converted. Break thou thyself through these impediments, in the true power of faith, and show others, by thy example, how they must serve God in all purity. If thou suffer reproach here with the children of God, and lendest thy helping hand to bear their burden, then shalt thou also partake with them in their glory hereafter.

Exc. 12. "But we must not draw down sufferings upon our heads, or wilfully run into them." Ans. Neither must thou be afraid of suffering, nor fly from it; as long as this flinching from the cross is in thee, thy faith is not what it should be. When a good thing is not to be attained without suffering, thou art absolutely bound to take it up. It is better to suffer all things, than to have an evil conscience. Learn what that means; "He that would be my disciple, must take up his cross daily," Luke ix. 23.

It is not required of thee that thou shouldst trouble thyself when thou art to suffer any thing; only do thou heartily the will of God, and all will be well. God will not lay more upon thee than thou art able to bear; for he is faithful, and will not suffer thee to be tempted beyond thy power. Thou representest it to thyself more hazardous than indeed it is. Now, thou art afraid of men; instead, thou shouldst endeavour to get a conquest over these fearful representations, and glorify the Lord God in thy heart, and then they will be afraid of thee.

Exc. 13. "But, however, we ought to go fair and softly to work, and do what good we can considerately and by degrees." Ans. Ay, this is something indeed. If we could but persuade the devil to go fair and softly too! but, alas! he "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" what is to be done then? "Whom resist, stedfast in the faith," 1 Peter v. 8, 9. Here, thou hearest that by being stedfast in faith, that is, in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost, thou must resist him without any fear of man, "by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true," 2 Cor. vi. 7, 8. The devil laughs at all thy fair and softly; give him but time and place, and you may be sure he will not be idle. And God will require the blood which thou hast neglected by thy softliness at thy hands.

Exc. 14. "An edge too sharp is easily turned." Ans. If this proverb be intended to signify that we may sometimes let odd be even, not to be over-careful about the peace of our conscience, and now and then in our function wink at the faults of those committed to our charge, or otherwise dissemble with

them, then it is all false prudence, and directly contrary to the cross of Christ. It is but just that we show love and meekness toward all men. And we ought more especially to declare to our hearers the gracious and overflowing kindness of God, that they may be gained thereby, rather than by railing and threatening. But at the same time we must use earnestness, and by all means take heed that "liberty be not made a cloak of maliciousness," 1 Pet. ii. 16. Unbelief and the fear of man are at the bottom of our heart, and with these specious and plausible sayings we excuse ourselves; and though we are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, and through our base fearfulness let all things lie in the greatest disorder and confusion, we would fain be looked upon as if we observed the golden middle way, and were careful in all things to preserve a due temperature and due moderation.

Exc. 15. Furthermore, the spiritual priesthood of christians is but little known now-a-days; and much less how in virtue of the same, every believer hath not only power, but is even obliged, to show his neighbour the right way, whenever he sees him led away into vice and delusion. Hence it is, that those who are not engaged in the public teaching-office are apt to excuse themselves, shift up this duty from one to another, when their neighbour should be admonished and reproved. This, in truth, is nothing else but a hypocritical fear of man, which commonly makes people speak as follows: "Why, what is it to me? I am no preacher, nor ever took the care of souls upon me. I am none of his tutors, nor master of the family. Let them look to their duty and charge." Yea, some who are ministers think that they have found a good excuse for themselves

derived from popery, and whereby those who are preachers, or designed for that office, are called spiritual men, and the rest of the people, laymen; whereas indeed all true christians, be they in what state they will, must be spiritually minded, as St. Paul teacheth; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you," 1 Cor. iii. 16. And Rom. viii. 9. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And verse 14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But we do not think of this, and scarcely know what the name of christian imports, namely, one anointed with the Spirit of Christ; and therefore think ourselves sufficiently excused when we can say, "I am a laick, and no spiritual man." It is not to be expressed what horrid mischief this wicked distinction is the cause of, and what deep root it hath taken in men's minds; insomuch, that the devil himself could hardly have found out a better way to persuade people that one is not as much bound as another exactly to order his life in all things according to the rule of God's word. Accordingly, Satan fails not presently to show his claws whenever this spiritual priestly office, commended to all christians, is earnestly pressed and inculcated. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," says God, Lev. xix. 17. not to the teachers alone, but to all in general. Thou canst not therefore but acknowledge that the commandments were given as well to thee, as to teachers; and that thou art bound to observe all the rules of Christ as well as they, although this does not take away the particular duty of each in their several stations.

Exc. 16. Every whit as absurd and frivolous is the excuse which many allege from their outward state and condition, when they say, "The place I am in, requires it of me." Many will say, "I take no delight in these vanities, in rich clothes, in banquets, in dancing, in plays, in operas, and the like; but I must do it, my state and quality obliges me to it; if I should not do it, others would take an opportunity to do worse: it is better, therefore, that I prevent more wickedness by my presence." This is one of the fruits of our modern religions, raised on maxims of state and policy; but if we bring it to the standard of apostolical christianity, it would be most convincingly evident, that it is altogether inconsistent with the truth as it is in Jesus. The world excuses all with this wretched shift: "Take away the abuse of things, but let the use continue." The true children of God, who are crucified to the world, and the world to them, cannot find the least true use in these things; but plainly discern that by them Satan ensnares the world still more and more, and makes his service more agreeable by means of those pleasant baits he lays before them: he insinuates, and this under a fair pretext too, that they are things indifferent, and that may lawfully be used, engaging them hereby to be his avowed votaries. When the true children of God would avoid or prevent any evil, they have no need of the devil's rattles and puppet-shows, but fly to their God, and commit themselves to his holy direction, in faith and confidence of his assistance, and, by raising themselves into the patience and long-suffering of God, they endure what they cannot prevent. They enjoy the necessary nourishment and refreshing of their bodies, for no other end but to spend the strength received

thereby, in humble acknowledgment and childlike thankfulness, and to renew the vigour of soul and body for the service of their neighbours.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the means whereby we may be delivered from the fear of man.

1. THE first and most necessary means to cast off this fear of man, is a constant and earnest endeavour to free ourselves from the most dangerous deceitfulness of our own hearts. Nothing is more mischievous, or proves a greater hinderance to a man's salvation, than that false conceit, when a man fancieth himself to be already a good christian, and actually in the state of grace, and consequently having no more need of repentance, and the first conversion to God. This false and most dangerous opinion is, alas! but too commonly entertained by the greatest part even of protestants themselves, who are not a little encouraged and fortified therein by unconverted ministers; for by them they are all, without any distinction, called beloved brethren in Christ; and, after death, declared happy and blessed.

For this reason, it is the most difficult task of a minister, to convince people, from the word of God, that they have not yet attained to true conversion, and that they must pass over into a quite different state from what they are in, if so be they desire to enter into the kingdom of God. Now when this false conceit is entertained by preachers also, and they fancy themselves already converted, though indeed they are not; (the greatest part of them having never tasted and experienced a real conversion in themselves;) then this false persua-

sion proves still more dangerous. Truly a minister is not easily removed from this opinion; for, having taken upon him to direct others in the way to heaven, he presupposes it as a most certain truth, that he is enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and that, being a spiritual man, he must needs have admittance to heaven before others. But because he sees but little difference, if any at all, betwixt himself and his auditors, and knoweth nothing of a saving change of heart, he by wholesale takes them all for true christians; and, like a blind pharisee, reproaches nothing but outward vices, his own inward part being not yet cleansed by the Spirit of God: and consequently neither he himself acquainted with the difference between the law and the gospel, nor with the right application of both, so as to awaken the people thereby out of their slumber, and to bring them over from their false and imaginary faith, to a true living one, working by love. And by means of these unconverted preachers, destitute of all experimental knowledge in spiritual affairs, whole congregations, cities, and countries, are countenanced in their carnal security.

Now when God is pleased to send forth faithful witnesses of his truth, and these begin to awaken people out of their spiritual sleep and deadness, then the devil is very busy to keep them captives to the fear of man, one fearing this, another that; and so, refusing to arise from their stupifying coldness, are unwilling to betake themselves to a stricter sort of life. And now the habitual state of carnal security joining with this fear of man, chokes the truth of God in the heart, that it cannot break forth with power. The best advice that can be given to a man in this case, is, that he thoroughly search and inquire into his own state and condition,

according to the tenour of the word of God, that he may not delude himself by a vain and fond conceit, hoping always the best of himself. By this means he may come to a full assurance of the state of his soul, and feel at last the witness the Spirit of God bears him, that he is in truth a child of God. For as long as a man is unwilling to part with his darling self-love, and to take the pains to search into the bottom of his heart, it is impossible for him to be rid of this inordinate fear; nay, he will not be able to make a right use of any means at all that may be offered him; for in this case the power of the Holy Ghost is absolutely necessary, being only obtained in our true conversion to God. Without this, a man will never get so far as in all his actions to eye God only, and to discharge his duty without the least fear of man. But how can this be done? No other way but by humble and continual prayer to our infinitely gracious God and heavenly Father, that he would be pleased to open the eyes of many to acknowledge their own misery, and to turn themselves from the bottom of their heart unto God, that so they may learn to draw strength out of the fulness of Christ, to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, which is acceptable unto him, Luke i. 74, 75.

2. And forasmuch as the want of self-denial is one of the chief causes of the fear of man, it will therefore be absolutely necessary, in order to our subduing of this vice, to endeavour after a true self-denying frame of spirit; for as long as we fear the loss of our honour and greatness in the world, of our goods or ease, so long we shall be loth, by a close following the steps of our Lord, to incur the displeasure and disrespect of men. But when we are once convinced, that godliness with content-

ment is the greatest gain; when we seek no other honour but what comes from God himself, nor any pleasure besides that of doing his will, we shall find it an easy matter to overcome the awe of men, and, with undauntedness, to confess the truth both in word and deed. Our Saviour's maxim is of unchangeable and indubitable truth: "Whosoever doth not renounce all he hath, cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 33.

3. He that would enter into a thorough self-denying life, and so free himself from the fear of man, must often set before his eyes the vanity, and even nothingness, of this world: for, whilst a man overvalues the honour, the riches, and pleasures of this world, it is impossible to deny himself in them; but as soon as he begins to discern all this, and that he hath been in pursuit of an idle dream and vanishing shadow, he is ashamed of himself, and looks out for something more worthy and durable. To this end it will be of great use to imprint in our hearts the following texts of scripture; "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth: for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more; but the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children," Psa. ciii. 15—17. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it," Isa. xl. 6, 7. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever," 1 John ii. 17. "The rich shall pass away as the flower of grass; for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the

flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways," Jas. i. 10, 11. What reason therefore hath any one to fear man upon the account of such vain and fading things? As the Book of Wisdom says, "What hath pride profited us? or what good hath riches, and vaunting the show of it, brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasted by. As a ship that passeth over the waves of the water, which, when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the way of the keel in the waves," chap. 8—10.

4. It will be needful also to have continually before our eyes the nothingness and vanity of man himself, that we may not be "afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in our heart," 1 Peter iii. 14, 15. "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are together lighter than vanity," Psa. lxii. 9; that is, as Luther adds, "He that puts his trust in men, will fail of his hopes; for let them be ever so great, yet they are still but as nothing, and vanity; and as they themselves must fail, so they will fail those that expect help from them." "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am to live. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain. He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," Psa. xxxix. 4—6. When a man, from these and other texts of scripture, duly considered and pon-

dered, is convinced of his own and other men's nothingness and vanity, then he will find no cause to fear them, but will say with David, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Psa. xxvii. 1. A man that duly considers these things, will no more make account of this present life, nor be afraid of men, for the maintenance of it.

5. The frequent and serious consideration of the pre-eminence of heavenly, divine, and everlasting things, will also not a little contribute towards an entire conquest over the fear of man; for as by this means our hearts are most powerfully withdrawn from the love of temporal and earthly things, so as no longer to look at the things which are visible and temporal, but at those which are invisible and eternal, so it will make all the fear we had for those, who, at their worst, can but damage us in temporals, to vanish into smoke. What we value not, neither are we afraid to lose; but we never cease valuing a thing till we get a sight of better and more glorious objects. He that hath continually in his eye the glorious majesty of the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, looks down upon men as weak and pitiful things, how high and dazzling soever they appeared to him before. Here we learn to obey the command of our Lord Jesus, who saith, "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28. He that is transformed into a heavenly frame of life, hath his conversation in heaven, and sets his affections on things above, and not on things of the earth, how should he fear men, who neither by slight nor might can put him by his ultimate end? The hurt men

do themselves by distracting their minds about the concerns of this temporal life, and but seldom or never sufficiently applying them to the life eternal, and the inestimable treasures of it, is altogether unutterable. What was the main reason why the primitive Christians were so far estranged from all fear of man, that they joyfully embraced martyrdom, and even ran to meet it, but because their minds were fixed upon the future eternal glory after this life, nay, had all the powers of their souls already dwelling there in a manner?

6. The faithful champions of Christ have found this also a certain and sure means to conquer the fear of man, namely, to enter immediately into a profound meditation of the bitter passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as soon as they found themselves under any temptation to it. It was this antidote St. Peter prescribed to believers, against the fear of man, in the first epist. chap. iv. 12, 13. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." And the exhortation recommends the same remedy to us; "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds," Heb xii. 3. And in 2 Cor. iv. 10. he saith, "We always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body." This is the true prophetical and apostolical mind, which few do apprehend; but they that apprehend and have it, tread in their footsteps, and declare themselves servants of the living God in true cheerfulness of faith.

They are not afraid of the terror of man, neither are they troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, 1 Pet. ii. 14. O Lord, help and assist us by thy mighty power to attain to that degree, that we may, from the bottom of our hearts, say with St. Paul, "We determine not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2.

7. In this consists the whole mystery of the cross, which is the wisdom St. Paul declared among them that are perfect; "Yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought; but the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory," 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7. He that begins to be a proficient in this hidden wisdom, will find the fear of man vanishing of itself. Why do we fear men? for no other reason, but because we are afraid of the cross. And why do we fear the cross? because we understand not the infinite good that lies in it; even because we do not apprehend, that since the fall, any thing that is to be really good, must spring up under, and, as it were, be begotten by the cross.

8. More especially would it be found an easy thing for us to overcome the fear of man, if we seriously considered what a mighty reward is annexed to the denial of this temporal life and goods, and the cheerful taking up of the cross. Christ tells us, "Every one that forsaketh houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for

my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad;" Matt. v. 10—12; "rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy," Luke vi. 22. "For great is your reward in heaven." "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him," Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. And who is able to enumerate all the glorious promises of God, that are made to such as willingly take up the cross of Christ?

9. The neglect also of duly considering the several degrees of splendour and glory, which shall be revealed in the children of God, doth not a little contribute to the detaining of men in subjection to the fear of man. For even the far greatest part of men are sunk into so much ignorance, that they scarcely remember ever to have heard of it; whereas if they lived in the knowledge and belief of it, they would with much more ease rid themselves of this slavish fearfulness. Of this, Moses had a view, when "he esteemed the reproach of Christ far greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward: wherefore also he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king," Heb. xi. 26, 27. And those believers mentioned, Heb. xi. 35, had the same object before them, who would not accept of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. What can be conceived more glorious than to be a bride of the Lamb, who stands at his right hand in gold of Ophir? Psa. xlv. 10; a glory never assigned to any of the angels themselves! This most

precious gold is nothing else but faith itself, which, after we have been exercised here in heaviness for a season, through manifold temptations, is made much more precious than the gold that perisheth, being tried in the fire, that it may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

None therefore can arrive at the glory of being called the dove and bride of Christ, but they that pass this trial of the cross, and overcome all in Jesus Christ. "For to him that overcometh," saith he himself, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. To be made wholly conformable to Christ, in his cross and sufferings, is the most glorious conformity; since the consequence thereof will be the highest conformity with him in his glory and eternal splendour following it. He that hath this imprinted in his mind, speaks heartily with St. Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter: nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35—39.

10. Neither is the frequent representing to ourselves of those courageous and faithful champions of Christ, mentioned in the scripture as well as other histories, of less avail towards the strengthening

of our faith in Christ. This was the way St. Paul took, to excite the Hebrews, who were weak in faith, Heb. xi. which being an excellent abstract of the whole Old Testament, ought to be more especially pondered by us, and applied for the support of our faith in all outward and inward temptations. St. Paul also takes notice in his epistle to the Phil. i. 14. "that many of the brethren, waxing confident by his bonds, had been much more bold to speak the word without fear." The histories likewise of the primitive, as well as later martyrs, were they more attentively considered, would contribute much towards our attainment of a true boldness of faith, so necessary for our christian warfare. Martin Luther gave this advice to his friend Jerome Weller, when he saw him sorrowful and much dejected, which moved him to make a collection out of the histories of the martyrs for his own use and edification, as appears from his small treatise, printed in the year 1697, and reprinted in 1700, under the title of "The School of the Cross." Neither are the modern persecutions less remarkable than those of old, and it is a blameworthy negligence and want of love, that they are so little minded. What Brousson and others have written concerning the late persecutions in France, may prove very beneficial and improving to an understanding reader. More especially, the example of Luther, and his oft-expressed courageousness of faith, ought to be a great encouragement towards the conquering of all fear of man; if not to others, at least to those who call themselves after his name.

11. But forasmuch as the strength of man is not sufficient to bring this about, it is necessary for every one to apply himself to God, in earnest prayer that he would be pleased graciously to vouchsafe

unto him his Holy Spirit, which is not a Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. And this is not of us, but the free gift of God, which gift he is most ready to impart to those who heartily pray for it. Let us ask, therefore, that we may receive. Neither must we only pray for this gift, but more especially at such times when we are called forth to act any thing requiring some exerting of the power of faith; that then we may do nothing according to our own conceit and apprehension, but in the first place lay it open before God in prayer, and then set upon it armed, and well appointed, with the whole armour of God. "Above all," saith St. Paul, Eph. vi. 16—18, "taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Of this we have a notable instance in Jacob, Gen. xxxii., how resolutely he wrestled with God, when he was afraid of his brother Esau. Let us, therefore, in like manner, wrestle with God, and the fear of man will soon vanish, and we shall be blessed with Jacob, becoming now the true Israel of God, who enjoy the blessing of peace and mercy, Gal. vi. 16.

12. As this cheerfulness of faith is greatly obstructed, and the vice of fearfulness confirmed and increased, when we consult with flesh and blood, or with other fearful men; so we ought either wholly to forsake such persons, and avoid all conversation with them, or to use it with great caution and circumspection, for fear of being involved in the snares

of fearfulness. There are many that take courage in God to undertake this or the other thing, in readiness of faith; but whilst they do not, with St. Paul, set about it immediately, without conferring with flesh and blood, (as he did, when he was to preach Christ among the heathen,) but first take the advice of this or another friend, who represent the thing doubtful and hazardous, they give over the design, and stifle the gift of God that was in them. Indeed, it is not to be expressed, how many useful designs are by this means hindered, stifled, and nipt in the bud. It is praiseworthy not to rely too much upon our own prudence, but to take the advice of experienced persons also into consideration: but withal, we must be wise and prudent, lest we fall into the other extreme, of being tossed and rocked with every wind of doctrine; for it is a good thing that the heart be established, which stability indeed is obtained by faith; but it is easily lost again by the fearful talk of those who have but little faith themselves, as appears in the instance of the children of Israel, mentioned Num. xiii. 32. and xiv. 1.

13. Because the apostles of our Lord were so sensible of the great damage which accrues to men by their conferring with flesh and blood, they themselves did not only carefully avoid it, Gal. i. 16, but warned others also against it; and though they were not wanting to set before them a whole cloud of witnesses, by whose example they might be effectually excited to a faith attended with life and energy, yet they chiefly pointed them to Christ, as the Beginner and Finisher of our faith, Heb. xii. 2. And it is very emphatical, what he adds, ver. 3, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds;" where the meaning of the word

in the Greek text, is properly this—Make a comparison, namely, betwixt that which Christ hath suffered, and what ye suffer; consider what a proportion and analogy there is betwixt these two: for sure it is, in case you resolve to be his true followers, you must resist unto blood, striving against sin.

This is what so powerfully inspired and encouraged St. Paul to expose himself to all manner of sufferings for the name of Christ, without any regard to the fear of man. For the mark he had always in his eye was, to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the "fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," Phil. iii. 10, 11. And, 2 Tim. ii. 8, 9, he saith, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." And 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21, from the same ground, saith, "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God: for even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps." Thus Moses also "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 26, 27. Christ himself likewise giveth the same instruction to his disciples; "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you," John xv. 18; and ver. 20, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord: if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my sayings, they will keep your's

also." And in his last farewell, he encourageth them with his continual presence, this being the fittest argument to comfort and raise their spirits; "Lo," saith he, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. Wherefore if any man would, in good earnest, be rid of the fear of man, let him eye continually the example and image of Christ, and know assuredly that he cannot be happier in this world, than when he cometh up to the nearest conformity with the image of his suffering and crucified Lord. And if his love to Christ be sincere, it will kindle in his heart an ardent desire to be made like unto his image: and this desire will dispel all the fear of man, because it makes the cross, which is so bitter unto the flesh, sweet and delightful unto the spirit; by which means the spirit at last gains a complete victory over the fearfulness of the flesh, so that it can no more hinder him to drink up most willingly the cup his Saviour hath appointed for him.

Nay, St. Paul assureth us, that a man not only overcomes thereby, but that he is even more than a conqueror; intimating, that by this victory he obtains an inconceivable advantage over all the sufferings which can befall him for the gospel's sake. And to this purpose he enumerates those seven calamities which may happen to a true child of God: "Who shall separate us from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Rom. viii. 35; and hereupon he adds, ver. 37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Neither doth he stop here, but expresseth the undaunted cheerfulness of his heart in Christ yet more emphatically, ver. 38, 39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life,

nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Let us, dear brethren, in like manner, as the first-fruits of the Lord, press in spirit into the living and powerful fellowship of Christ Jesus, so that we may live no more, but that he may live in us; "And the life which we now live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us," Gal. ii. 20. Thus all fear of man will soon vanish out of our hearts, and the joyful spirit of Christ Jesus will fill up the room it had there, and make us grow in strength, comfort and encourage us in all our combats, and afford us a continual train of victories.

14. Now, forasmuch as Jesus Christ himself is he that most certainly can deliver us from all fear of man, and clothe us with his power, so as that, though we be assaulted by it, yet we shall, notwithstanding, get the victory over it; so, none can teach us better how, and by what means, we must strive and fight against the temptations of this fearfulness, than He himself. And this he hath done most faithfully, especially in the latter part of his state of humiliation, comforting and raising the spirits of his sorrowful disciples, in his farewell discourse, to that degree, that every one that is plagued with the fear of man will find a most effectual medicine against it in the 13th to the 17th chapters of St. John's gospel, if he will but read and consider them with due application, accompanied with hearty prayer and supplication to God. Now, the principal point insisted upon in these chapters is, Christ's promise of sending the Holy Ghost to his disciples, whom also he calleth the Comforter, because he

drives away all fear of man out of the heart, filling and overflowing the same with a stream of life and power—which no rational grounds of comfort can afford, though they may convince our understanding.

Therefore, he that would be a disciple of Christ in truth and good earnest, hath nothing else to do, but, with full assurance, to accept of, and to rely upon, this his promise; and, with a filial freedom and confidence, pray to Christ that he would powerfully make good the said promise to him. This was it to which St. Paul directed Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 7, 8. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God." St. Peter says to the same purpose, 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. that when we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, and willingly bear reproach for his name's sake, the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us. And since Christ himself is so near at hand to a man that suffers for his sake, that thereby he becometh a tabernacle or habitation of God, upon which the glory of God resteth, yea, which is filled with the Spirit of glory and of God, should he not be powerfully moved thereby, at any time when he lies under the temptation of the fear of man, willingly to embrace the cross, as believing that the power of Jesus Christ will be perfected in his weakness? And what a surpassing comfort is it, that the same Holy Spirit also helpeth our infirmities! that whereas we know not what we should pray for as we ought, the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered! that is, most powerfully, and in a manner inconceivable by human reason, he

being our chief Advocate in heaven, and in the counsel of the Holy Trinity, bequeathed to us by Christ, as long as we continue orphans in this world. See John xiv. 17, 18. Rom. viii. 26. Nay, Christ himself, who is at the right hand of God, makes also intercession for us, ver. 34. O that we were thoroughly sensible of the joy and readiness lodged in the heart of God, to support all those who, seeking all their comfort and help from him alone, rely entirely upon his paternal goodness! How easy would it be for us then to get rid of the fear of man, and even blush for shame that we had ever been diverted by it from any good undertaking!

15. Would we further lay to heart with what extraordinary earnestness the apostles endeavoured to free every one, that named the name of Christ, from the fear of man; or would we know wherewith they strengthened, and with what weapons they armed themselves, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, against all manner of assaults from within and without, let us read Eph. vi. 10—20. and follow the good advice given us therein; then, without doubt, this enemy, the fear of man, will first be conquered, and we enabled thereby to cut down with the same weapons all the rest of our enemies, in the name of the Lord. "Finally," saith he, "my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil: for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand," and thus gain the victory; which you will

in no ways be able to obtain by human weapons, namely, natural wisdom, learning, and the like.

Stand, therefore, and be not of the number of those that give way for fear of their enemies, having your loins girt about with truth, Isa. xi. 5; that the knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness, may keep your heart and mind, your words, works, and affections, within the right bounds, that ye lose not your raiment, and the shame of your nakedness do not appear. "And having on the breastplate of righteousness," to keep your breast and heart from all unjust things and practices, giving them no inlet into your soul, Isa. lix. 17. and your feet shod with the preparation; that is, the forward readiness and cheerfulness, of the spirit of the gospel of peace, Isa. lii. 7. "Above all, taking the shield of faith," as Abraham did, Gen. xv. 16; and David, "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," Psa. xci. 4, 5. and so not only the fear of man, but of all the devils in hell also. And take the helmet of salvation, "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," Isa. lix. 17. 1 Thess. v. 8. as Christ himself did, Heb. iv. 21. Rev. i. 6. "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," Matt. iv. 4, &c. "and watching thereunto," John iv. 23, 24. "with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints, and for me also, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly," Matt. xxvi. 41. without any fear of man, even then when life is thereby exposed to apparent danger; to make known the mystery of the gospel; not to hide it under a bushel of fearfulness: for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak, without being baffled, or dashed by the fear of present death.

Is not the whole storehouse of divine ammunition opened in these words, and the whole armour of God presented to us, not merely to gaze upon them, but to lay hold of, and to put them on, if we would not with horror remember the words of the Holy Ghost, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 7, 8. Oh! dreadful sentence, pronounced against the fear of man, which yet too commonly is looked upon as a mere trifle, and inconsiderable. Neither need we wonder at the punishment assigned to this sin, if we call to mind what before hath been said of the manifold hurt and mischief that is caused, and the great good that is hindered by it.

16. To this purpose also we should call to mind the doctrine of the royal priesthood of Christians, whereof we meet with such glorious declarations in the scripture, and, in particular, in 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Which words of St. Peter direct us to Exod. xix. 4—6, where we find these emphatical expressions of God: "The Lord called unto Moses out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,

then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

But because some that are weak in faith might object, that these words do not belong to them, because they were spoken by God to Israel after the flesh; therefore St. Peter points them further to the 2d chap. of Hosea, ver. 23, thereby informing them, that by faith they are become the true peculiar people of God, and have a right to lay claim to, and to comfort themselves with all the glorious promises of God, with an assurance no less than Israel after the flesh. And now, to what purpose did God in the foresaid place, make this most comfortable declaration to the Israelites? was it not, that he might chase away all fear of man from their hearts, assuring themselves, that none, how powerful soever, should be able to hurt them, as long as they continued faithful to his covenant, not by profession only, but in deed and in truth, and yielded filial obedience to his commands? As they had seen with their own eyes, how that all the power of the Egyptians was confounded before them; and therefore represents to them their high rank and nobility, that they are a priestly kingdom and holy people. This promise also he made good to them indeed: for though this people were the least of all nations, yet none were able to resist them, as long as they continued in his ways. He hath, moreover, evidenced by many instances, that the whole world cannot hurt a man that entirely relies upon this his promise: for he that trusts in God, doth by this faith unite himself to that degree with the power of the living God and Creator of heaven

and earth, that thereby he becomes much stronger than the whole world, whether visible or invisible.

This precious promise of God concerning the royal priesthood of the saints, was confirmed and sealed by the death, and in the blood, of the Son of God: "Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, and the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen!" Rev. i. 5, 6. But who is it that giveth him the glory due unto him, but he that demonstrates himself to be one of these royal priests, by casting off all the fear of man, and fighting the good fight lawfully, according to the rules of combat, that, having finished his course, and kept the faith, he may obtain the crown of righteousness from the hand of his God, 2 Tim. ii. 5. iv. 7, 8. Does not St. Paul deny this royal crown even to them that strive, and so seem in some sort to conquer the fear of man, but not lawfully? It is therefore necessary to break through in faith, and to give to God the things that are God's, and to Cesar the things that are Cesar's. A divided heart is not at all acceptable unto God; and though he seems often to bear with it in patience, yet nobody ought to turn the divine forbearance into a cloak of sloth, negligence, and fearfulness; but rather ought to be the more awakened and excited thereby to break through all difficulties, into a true cheerfulness of faith, which God is willing to give to all, without respect of persons. For what other reason has he given such great and precious promises to men, but to testify how earnestly he desires that those who hear and read them, might thereby be made

partakers of the divine nature, which has no fellowship at all with the base vice of human fearfulness.

Oh! how sensible shall many be at that day, of the horrible effects of this dismal sin; perceiving then, but too late, what a glorious crown, what a heavenly kingdom, and unspeakable glory, they have lost by it!

Let every one, therefore, rouse himself, who in his holy baptism hath professed to renounce the devil and all his works, and entirely to dedicate himself to the service of the Lord of hosts, seriously considering with how holy and high a Majesty, with how great a Monarch, (who indeed is the only Potentate,) he hath entrusted his soul and body, to the end he may rid himself of this foolish and unreasonable fear of man, and "no more fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28. Let him think with himself, that he is not only secure under the protection of so great a King; for "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, and abideth under the shadow of the Almighty, saith of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God; in him will I trust," Psa. xci. 1, 2. But let him also duly consider, that he is not to fight this combat by his own strength, but that the Captain of the Lord's hosts, delivering his own sword to him, will arm him with his own power, and encourage him, as he did Joshua, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: (Heb. xiii. 5.) be strong and of good courage, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, if

thou continuest in the keeping of my words, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong, and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest," Josh. i. 5—8.

These words were spoken in particular to Joshua, designed, as a type of Christ, to conquer the land of promise, and put the children of Israel in possession of it: but inasmuch as it is the duty of every one of us to overcome the world by faith, and to take possession of the true Canaan, they as truly are addressed to us; and therefore we ought firmly to believe that these words are spoken to every one of us, as well as to Joshua himself. And for this reason, St. Paul also allegeth them as a general promise, Heb. xiii. 5.

Lastly. Let every one of us consider that the only way for us to secure to ourselves the pre-eminence of this royal priesthood, is to fight manfully the battles of the Lord of hosts, and, come life come death, press through to him: so shall we "forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 13, 14.

17. In a word, all holy writ, from the beginning to the end, nay, even heaven and earth, and all the creatures of God, would prove happy means to rid us of the fear of man, could we behold and consider them with a believing heart. Does not our Saviour upbraid and reproach our foolish fear of man, by sending us to the sparrows for better information? "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father," Matt. x. 29. Nay, he

directs us to the very hairs of our head, saying, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered;" and from thence infers, ver. 31. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." He takes the grass of the field to witness against our little faith, Matt. vi. 30. and all this to expose our horrible unbelief to shame and confusion, and to represent to us in a clear light, that a man by faith becomes the most glorious, as by unbelief the most base and miserable of all creatures.

18. But because the heart of man is so deeply sunk into atheism and denial of God; for what is the fear of man but a denying of that majesty which alone can defend and preserve us, so as that, even in death itself, nothing can hurt us? therefore it is highly necessary that a man, how bold and courageous soever his nature may be, renew himself in the spirit of his mind, and daily draw life and nourishment from the word of God; stir up himself in prayer, and strengthen himself with the company of other true and faithful christians, if it may be; since Christ himself has promised to be among, and to impart his blessing and power to those that are gathered together in his name, Matt. xviii. 20. He ought to stir up the gift of God; that is, the childlike, cheerful spirit, always and without intermission; as St. Paul exhorts his son Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 6. even as a fire by constant blowing is kept up to a flame. He ought to press to higher degrees of faith, by pondering the precious promises of God, and continually exercising his love to his neighbour to the uttermost of his power, with all singleness of heart, whenever God affords him opportunity; for nothing conduceth more to the growth and increase of faith than a continual exercise.

If he perceives himself to be naturally inclined to bashfulness and fearfulness, let him with the greater earnestness assault this enemy, and above all things make it his business to keep a good and unblameable conscience, lest his natural fearfulness grow upon him, and, when his sword is broken, expose him to the reproach and uncharitable reflections of others. He ought to have a care in the beginning, not to make himself a slave of other men; especially of those who are in high places, and who can easily frighten him, through their power and authority; but behave himself always as a faithful servant of God, in all humility and discretion. And if in the beginning he have perhaps fallen short, and been wavering, yet afterwards he may the more encourage himself in God, thenceforward to obey him more than men: not suffering himself any more to be diverted from this kingly resolution and courage, either by force or subtlety. He ought to lift up his head in the power of Christ, though it were under the hardest combat and greatest poverty of spirit.

He is to make the glory of God his end in all he does or leaves undone, diligently searching himself, that this mark be not removed by the subtlety of the serpent, or mingled with false and sinister by-ends. For though God be so faithful as not to suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, yet withal he hath placed us here in a state of warfare and fighting, and to this end hath himself put weapons into our hands, to the end we may not be negligent and slothful, but unweariedly fight it out, and make the best use of our spiritual weapons; and whenever we perceive a failure, to amend the same presently, not casting away our confidence, but continuing faithful unto the end.

Blessed is he that thus holds out, and stands his ground in all combats and assaults, Josh. iv. 10. even when the enemy cries, I have prevailed against him: for he shall go from faith to faith, from strength to strength, and finally overcome and inherit all in and with Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

Of christian discretion, wisdom and prudence, to be observed in the exercise of a true boldness of faith. That we must distinguish between faith and rashness.

1. What hath been alleged in the foregoing chapter from the word of God, concerning the proper means whereby to get rid of the fear of man, and to attain to a true christian boldness of faith, might be thought sufficient: but forasmuch as flesh and blood is commonly inclined either to exceed or fall short in matter of duty; so it may easily happen that whilst a man endeavours to avoid the fear of man, he may fall into the contrary vices of rashness, presumption, inconsiderateness, and other such like unwarrantable doings, despising others in his heart, who perhaps do not half the mischief by their bashfulness and fearfulness, as he doth by his indiscreet overforwardness and boldness. This now must needs produce all manner of monstrous and evil effects; and therefore it will be necessary for every one to be upon his guard, that he may, by the grace of God, be taught to move in the middle way, endeavouring after a true boldness of a divine faith, and not pleasing himself with a dead phantom, or a vain conceit of it.

2. Wherefore we are before all things to consider, that as there is no true faith which hath not true repentance for its ground and foundation, so

neither can there be any true boldness of faith, unless a man have passed through a true process of repentance, and exercise himself daily in it. For a cheerful and undaunted faith is no such bold ungoverned rashness as is found in a wild soldier; but it is the fear of God, which having taken possession of the heart, does expel the fear of man. Where the spirit of man is truly humbled and broken under the mighty hand of God, there the power and Spirit of God dwells and exerts itself so gloriously, that there is no room left for the flesh to boast itself. Let no man here deceive himself: there is no escaping the troublesome work of true repentance; and where that is passed through, there thy vain boastings will be cut off. Whatsoever is not raised on a solid and divine foundation, cannot last long, let the outward appearance of it be ever so great and glorious.

3. The true boldness of faith appears then most visibly when it is most active and operative by love. By faith a man is made a lord over all; but by love he is a servant of all: by faith he is a king; by love a spiritual priest, ministering, not lording, in God's sanctuary. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16. Now, when a man doth not abide in love, but is puffed up and swayed by his carnal passions, as hatred, wrath, railing and scorning, he must not pretend then to a true boldness of faith. And though he may have had some degree of it before, yet is it now impaired and sophisticated by such ungodly excesses. Therefore in this case, a man ought to humble himself before God, and, by a sincere renewal of his mind in the spirit of love and divine peace, to press in again into the possession of a true cheerfulness of faith.

Satan indeed will not be wanting, by occasion of these failings, to cast him down, and deprive him of all his presence and serenity of mind; but here it is, then, that he must resist him stedfast in faith, and humble himself the more under the mighty hand of God, owning himself guilty before him, and then proceed again in his work of faith, and in his labour of love, and patience of hope.

4. To keep up and preserve this cheerfulness, we must continue in prayer and childlike communion with God; for by this the mind of a man becomes sanctified, and is best guarded from all wanderings and vain excursions, and inspired with true love of meekness towards men. If faith be attended with so noble a train of divine virtues, its boldness will then most powerfully and effectually exert itself. Whosoever observes this advice, and by humble prayer endeavours after communion with God and holiness of heart, he will not only be fortified against all precipitancy and hastiness of spirit, but also his tempting of God, against which the men of little faith chiefly put in their caveats.

5. Neither doth this boldness of faith take away that so often and earnestly enjoined obedience which one christian owes another, according to 1 Pet. v. 5. and more especially which the younger and unexperienced owe to their elders and more experienced; children to their parents, (by nature or grace;) yet with this caution, that it be never a blindfold obedience, preferring the authority of a man before the clear and evident command of God.

The nature of the gospel-obedience has been lately described to the life, in a treatise writ in High-Dutch, by Balthazar Kopke, inspector at Nauen, in the king of Prussia's dominions. Truly, this caution is highly necessary, there being but too many

who think they act entirely in faith, and express an extraordinary courage and cheerfulness, when, indeed, they follow their own wild-fire, and exalt themselves above others by a vain self-conceit and wilfulness. Which distemper is the more dangerous, the less remedy can be applied to cure it. For those that walk in the light of the fire of their own kindling, whenever they are advised to true humility, christian discretion, and obedience, are very apt to suspect that it proceeds from a design of lording over their consciences, and that all the good counsels given to them are no better than the effect of the fear of man, and unbelief: they think themselves very happy that they do not adhere to men, without taking notice how deeply they are enslaved to themselves. He is truly wise and prudent who endeavours more and more to humble himself, and is ready to submit to all men. For where humility is constantly practised, there the enemy finds no room for dangerous temptations. He that stands lowest falls easiest.

6. St. Paul's words are emphatical, and ought to be well considered; "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. Happy therefore is that man in whom not the spirit of fear, but of power, takes place, and enables him both to do good, and suffer evil, with courage and cheerfulness. But this spirit must be also a spirit of love, so that all actions and sufferings of a man flow from a sound sense of the love of God and man. It must be also a spirit of soundness of mind; that is, according to the true sense of the Greek word, a spirit of wisdom, prudence, discretion, moderation, and sobriety of mind. This spirit works all this in man, and through him again, in others; making him not only to discharge

his duty with all undaunted courage, and influencing him with a pure desire to promote nothing but the glory of God, and the good of his neighbour; but enabling him moreover to behave himself in all his doings and sufferings with divine prudence and wisdom. This St. James intended, when he adviseth, chap. i. ver. 5. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." For there is also a false prudence, with which St. Peter was overtaken, when he took Christ aside, and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." Whereupon Christ turned, and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." How can a man be better secured and set free from this specious but false prudence, than by continually keeping a watchful eye over his own spirit, humbling himself always before God; and, like a helpless infant, praying to God for wisdom and understanding, and taking the word of God to be his constant counsellor? For God's word cannot lie; and this gives us the assured promise, that he who endeavours to act in all things according to what is written in the law, shall prosper in whatever he undertakes. See Luke i. 6. Psa. i. 2, 3. cxix. 9.

7. Where this foundation is laid, we need not fear any hurt from the boldness of faith. And though, perhaps, for want of experience, it may not be always exerted in due place or time; yet are we to take heed, as soon as we are sensible of it, that we be not too much cast down on account of this imperfection, but rather praise God from the bottom of our heart, who gives us a sense of our failings for this very end, that we may mend them, and he himself in time

bring all things into a better order, and more composed condition. But whenever we observe such like failures in others, we ought still to be much more cautious of judging them; because God will not judge according to our, but according to his own mind; and "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways." In this case we often find the truth of what the psalmist saith, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, thou hast perfected praise," Matt. xxi. 16. Psa. viii. 2. "and if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out," Luke xix. 40. It is much easier to judge others than to judge ourselves; and it happens frequently, that we find fault with the manner of another man's acting, though we never undertook to do it better; doing hardly any good ourselves, or suffering others to do it, since we see no way to undertake it, without provoking the devil and his instruments. And thus we quench the Spirit of God, by endeavouring to avoid outward disorders, as we find it exemplified in the behaviour of the high-priests and scribes towards the apostles of the Lord, in Acts iv. 16—18.

But hereby we do not in the least reflect upon any one, who from a long experience in the ways of the Lord, and in the spirit of wisdom and love, doth admonish his brother, and remind him of the failings which have overtaken him in any of his actions, performed in the cheerfulness of faith, and so sets him right in the spirit of meekness. By this he doth not stifle any good that is in him, but rather prunes the good tree from its superfluous and irregular suckers; and for the rest, like a skilful gardener, takes care of, and has an eye over him, that he bring forth his fruit in his season, and his leaf may not wither, but prosper in all he does.

8. Let us then continually join the exercise of daily repentance, of true humility, hearty love, christian discretion, the denial of ourselves and our own wills, obedience, submission, prayer, meekness, and patience of Christ, hearty compassion for the failings of our brethren, and all other virtues that flow from the wisdom that is from above; let us, I say, join and knit all these together with the cheerful exercise of faith and trust in God, casting off all inordinate fear of man. Let us excite one another, with comfortable words, to a ready practice of faith. Wheresoever God has wrought a good will, let us take heed of damping it, or despising what is good, in any of the least members of Christ; but let us cherish it through the word of the gospel, and by the rules of wisdom keep it within such bounds as may in time bring it to a fuller and more substantial maturity. Thus, what has been lost or spoiled by want of faith, and the fear of man, may in the power of God be recovered and restored through faith and love.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the inestimable good which ariseth from the boldness of faith conquering all fear of man.

1. It doth not seem needful to set forth the manifold and glorious advantages which accrue to those who, by the Spirit of God, are set free from the fear of man. For if any one will but duly weigh and consider what has been said in the fourth chapter, of the manifold great mischiefs that proceed from the fear of man, he will easily perceive, by the rule of contraries, the exceeding great profit that results from the cheerfulness of faith. Wherefore I refer the reader to that chapter, desiring him seriously to consider what is there offered. But yet if a man were

inclined further to enlarge upon this subject, by representing from scripture all the wonderful advantages of a bold and active faith, it would not be altogether fruitless, but be a further confirmation of what has been said before.

2. The eleventh chapter to the Hebrews lays an ample foundation for these reflections; for it does not only represent the manifold glorious effects of faith for our excitement and edification, but, moreover, teaches us how to understand all holy scripture, and to know the power of God, which hath so manifestly exerted itself in true believers. But here it will be necessary to bid you take heed of making God changeable, in saying, with the unbelieving world, "This indeed hath been done formerly, but now it happens no more;" for by this false maxim, suggested from the bottomless pit, the highest dishonour imaginable is put upon the living God, by making void all his precious promises, together with all the examples he hath set before our eyes; and all his divine calls, invitations, and allurements to an active faith, are made null and insignificant. And whereas we have none to blame but ourselves, for not treading in the same footsteps of faith in which the saints of old walked, and consequently for not seeing the glory of God as they did, we rather choose to cast all the blame upon God, and devise a difference of times, whereas the difference is to be looked for in the persons themselves. For though it cannot be said that every believing christian must do the very same works which were done by Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others; yet ought every one to follow the faith of these godly men, and to show and exert the same with full power and energy, in that state and condition wherein God has placed him, and in those

circumstances which are daily offered. And in so doing, he may be fully assured that he also shall see the glory of God, as well as they of old did experience the same. And with such a heart and mind is the scripture to be read and searched into, and the examples of faith, and the glorious effects of it, to be duly considered; that so by this means we may receive strength and holy boldness, more nearly to unite ourselves with God, and to enjoy his infinite love, goodness, and faithfulness, in a more ample and abundant manner.

3. The chief advantage, not only of cheerfulness in believing, but of faith itself absolutely considered as it treats with God, and relies upon the redemption made by Jesus Christ, is this, that it lays hold on the righteousness of God, and makes man a friend of God; and this is confirmed by the example of Abraham. And ought not we therefore to make it our great business to obtain the same spirit of faith that dwelt in Abraham, and most seriously to weigh and consider the fruits and power of it, with more exactness than is commonly done, and so learn to know Abraham according to that inward divine ground and foundation that was in him, and according to that infinite blessing which attended his faith? Thus we should soon perceive that the faith residing in Abraham was something far more considerable, glorious, and divine, than a bare and idle conceit of the brain, (which some take to be faith,) without ever tasting and experiencing the fruits which Abraham reaped from it. Oh! it is indeed a great thing to be a true son of Abraham in faith, and to walk in the same footsteps of faith, and cheerfully to fight our way through all temptations; to hope against hope, and believe what we see not.

4. Now because faith is so high and precious a gift of God, and yet commonly not esteemed according to its true worth and dignity, it is no wonder that there are so very few who read the scripture with a seeing eye, so as to know that it is a book which throughout teacheth, that all the good that ever was wrought in the world by men, is done by faith, by which God unites himself so closely with men, that all things become possible to them; and that God hath manifested himself so gloriously and powerfully in all believers, though in some otherwise than in others, according to the several works they were engaged in. Wherefore it is highly necessary, with all plainness and earnestness, to represent, not only to the world, but to the children of God also, that faith is something far more great and glorious than reason is able to conceive or express; for as long as a man is not sensible of this, nor duly lays it to heart, so long he will be utterly unable to comprehend, in the least, what an inestimable treasure true faith brings along with it, notwithstanding that the whole 11th chapter to the Hebrews lays before us a large catalogue of its wondrous fruits or effects. But when this faith cometh to be known according to the true description given of it, Heb. xi. 1. namely, that it is the substance, or the ground and basis, of things hoped for, whereupon, as an immoveable sure foundation, all the inconceivable happiness we hope for, doth rest: and a convincing evidence and testimony of the Spirit, which assures us, beyond all doubt, of things not seen; I say, where faith is thus known in the light of God's Spirit, and a man experiences it to be so in his heart, then he sees at the same time that the fruit and advantage of that faith which overcometh all fear of man, is of so large a compass, as to

contain all the good things we can conceive or hope for from God, even all that can be conceived or expressed. For then he discovers, that it is faith which carries a man through, and delivers him from, all evil of soul and body; and, on the other hand, puts him in possession of sovereign bliss, and the fulness of God himself, or the divine fulness, and unites him with God, beyond all rational comprehension, making him a right happy man in time and eternity. When a man, I say, attains to a true and experimental knowledge of this, then he will also more fully comprehend what a vast advantage a true cheerfulness of faith hath above fearfulness and pusillanimity, and that God, both in the Old and New Testament, whenever he was about performing any thing that was great and glorious, always employed those he had set free from the bonds of the slavish fear of man.

On the other hand, the scripture as plainly asserts, that wherever the fear of man has intruded itself, all good undertakings have been entirely spoiled and destroyed. A single man setting aside the fear of flesh and blood, and venturing in the name of the living God, hath frequently been a means of saving a whole nation: and what was more remarkable in the apostles, at their first entering upon preaching the gospel, than their great boldness and presence of mind, at which the high-priests, scribes, and elders themselves stood amazed, Acts iv. 13.—where we clearly see that the fear of man was to be expelled, before the gospel of Christ could be preached to all the world. And for this reason, the apostles of the Lamb are set before us as examples, teaching us by the victory of their faith, to cast off the fear of man, and confess Christ and his gospel before all the world, bear-

ing his cross and reproach willingly, that in due time we may also be partakers of his glory.

If so be the reader is now convinced, by what has been said, that the fear of man is a most damnable fruit or product of unbelief, and the mother of many other abominable evils, and hath seriously laid to heart the means whereby he may attain to a true cheerfulness of faith; then nothing remains, but that he experience in himself, that where the fear of man is overcome, there a door is opened to the obtaining of all divine gifts and graces, and an entrance vouchsafed into the happy fellowship of the blessed cross, and the exceeding great glory that will follow after it: and therefore a certain author calls it, "the first seal of the book, mentioned Rev. v. of which he says, the first evil spirit, or first seal to be opened in this book, is the fear of man, a most wicked devil indeed!" who hinders and opposes the fear of God in us. One fear casts out another; and where men are feared, there God, his counsel and word, are despised and made light of. Now, when a man is about to follow Christ, and to enter into the rest of God, by walking in the way of the cross, and performing his baptismal vow through much tribulation, then the fear of man and his tyranny steps in, and stops him from attaining the favour and fear of God, which is the beginning of divine wisdom; for he fears, should he comply with the will of Christ, it might cost him life, and all he hath. Here is a bolt in his way, and a seal on the book, confining him to a servile state, and restraining him from arriving to that true sonship and liberty, promised to all the children and freemen in the house of God. Every one, therefore, by shaking off the fear of man, must hazard himself, casting behind him, hating, forsaking, and denying his own dear soul and life, and,

much more, wife, children, parents, house, and lands, if he desire to attain to the art of God, which will teach him not to understand, interpret, and explain the scriptures according to the anxious impressions of the fear of man, as the world, and blind letter-learned, which are not instructed to the kingdom of God, are used to do, to avoid thereby the cross; but freely, according to the sense and mind of God in the Holy Ghost. Certainly we must follow Christ, bear the cross, hate our life, and forsake all, if we would be Christ's disciples, as indeed we meet with nothing so frequently inculcated by the evangelists, who understood the necessity of it, and that without it we cannot be admitted into the school of Christ, nor be his disciples; therefore must this seal be first opened, and this devil of the fear of man cast out, before the fear of God can enter, and this seal of the book be opened. But a man must suffer manifold trials and great opposition, until the fear of man be wholly cast out, and the pure fear of God enter in. As far as the fear of God enters, so far the devil leaves him, and the seal of the fear of man is opened, and the wisdom of God begins to take place in him, Eccl. i.

A PRAYER

Against the Fear of Man.

O LORD, whose wisdom is everlasting, and power infinite, and whose eyes are open over the ways of the children of men, to give to every one according to his ways, and the fruit of his doings; it is manifest to thee, that the fear of man, (by which thy glory and majesty is denied, and thy infinite power, which thou hast shown from the beginning, is despised and made to truckle under by the nothingness of mortal men, who are but dust and ashes,) bears the sway every where, and is the mother of innumerable crimes and abominable sins, though generally esteemed by men as a part of prudence, and ranked in the number of virtues. O Lord, how deeply are we sunk and plunged into atheism, and a denial of thy eternal Godhead, from our youth up, through that general corruption that overspreads the face of the whole earth! In thee we live, and move, and have our being; and yet how backward are we to seek thee, if haply we might feel after thee and find thee, though thou art not far from us, and nothing can subsist without thee. Alas! how entirely are we turned towards these outward things, though the nature of true faith be to look "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen!" This word, faith, we have much in our mouths, but not as an olive-leaf of peace; for the power of faith is hardly any where to be found. What is all our doing, when compared with the examples of the ancients? These were men indeed, and performed manly deeds; but

whatever we pretend to is mere child's play, and a transitory dream. We boast of faith, and are put into a fright by the least rushing of a leaf: when indeed our hearts ought not to be afraid, though many hundred thousands were encamped against us round about, to devour us. Art not thou, O Lord, our light and salvation? whom then have we cause to fear? Art not thou the strength of our life? why then are we terrified? Do we believe that thou art with us? why then do we fear any that are against us? Who is he that can hurt us, when we have our almighty Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, for our Friend?

But thou seest, O Lord, that hypocrisy has filled the earth, and that men dissemble, and lie to their neighbour, for temporal interest; and yet for all that, we imagine ourselves to be in a good state, and think the church in a flourishing condition! But be thou pleased, O Lord, to inspect our case, and to create a help for us. Send forth again the Spirit of faith, as of old, that thy servants may be known, by their not being the servants of men; and thy messengers, by being raised above the fear of tyrants. O Lord, let the simplicity and cheerfulness of thy servants, despised of the world, shine forth and flourish again, whom thou didst make use of as thy mouth, and didst confirm their testimony by their sufferings, and thy wonderful assistance; honouring those who honoured thee, without any respect of persons. Thou didst make them a fenced wall of brass, which every one did fight against, but could not prevail over them; for thou didst deliver them out of the hands of the wicked, and didst redeem them out of the hands of the terrible ones. O Lord, let thy face shine upon us again, that we may behold thy glory; so shall

we be healed, and thou alone magnified, and thy name only sanctified in our hearts, and through thy power we shall overcome all.

Open the eyes of those whose feet thou hast turned into the path of peace, and discover to them the great perilousness of our times, that they may know how highly necessary it is for them in their soul, and from the bottom of their hearts, to be separated from all creatures, and to be firmly united to thee by faith; to the end they may continue faithful under all the manifold temptations which daily befall them, or may assault them for the future: and that they may not suffer themselves to be drawn away with others into a perverse mind. Confound, O Lord, all false prudence, which flies back at the cross of Jesus Christ, and leads the inconsiderate into the ways of Balaam. O Lord, awaken them that are asleep in the state of carnal security, persuading themselves that they faithfully serve thee, whilst in all things they endeavour only to imitate and please men. Rouse them, O Lord, that the dead may no longer bury the dead. Send thy Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, into the hearts of the pastors of thy church, that every one may clearly see and perceive, not in a few, but many thousands, what a vast difference there is betwixt hirelings, who are afraid of men, and of losing a temporal benefice, and the true servants of God, the ministers of the Most High, who do not seek their own, nor desire to please men, but count not their lives dear; "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in their mortal bodies." Prepare the youth for thy service, and vouchsafe thy blessing unto them,

that they may be like arrows in the hand of the mighty. Fill many thousands with the bold and joyful spirit of thy prophets and apostles, and make them as so many polished arrows in thy hand, that they may fly straight to the mark, that so at last all the earth may be filled with thy glory. Vouchsafe also, of thine infinite grace, thy blessing to this testimony, that many, learning thereby to mind themselves, may begin to feel their own deplorable condition, and so courageously enter upon a constant warfare against the fear of man, and through thy mighty power fully overcome and conquer it. O Lord God of hosts, hear us, and comfort us again with thy help! To thy name give the glory, that thou mayest be known by all men, according as thou hast revealed thyself in thy most holy word. Amen.

FINIS.

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